

Australians at War Film Archive

Richard Grigg (Bill) - Transcript of interview

Date of interview: 25th November 2003

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1159>

Tape 1

00:41 **You were telling us about you were born in Geelong.**

00:44 No, I was born in Narre Warren, that's a little place outside of Melbourne towards Gippsland not far out of Melbourne, down towards Gippsland. We were there for three years,

01:00 I think, and then moved down to Bellarine. Bellarine is between Drysdale and Portarlington we were there two or three years and then we moved back up to Drysdale, and I was there until, until the war.

01:17 **Can you tell us about your father, what work did he do?**

01:22 He was a farmer and then we moved to Drysdale he and

01:30 his brother they had a flax mill. They had that for quite a few years and when the war came on the father he, there were very few people who knew about flax, and he had a job as an inspector. They started up factories Colac, Whittlesea, Tasmania, he used to go around inspecting them.

02:00 And in his early days he was a well-known footballer, he was a good footballer and he used to play for Geelong, played for 11 years, best and fairest the last three or four years and 1914 he was selected in a team

02:30 to go and play exhibition games in America, which every few people knew about and they were in Sydney waiting for the boat to go and the war broke out and that was the finish of his football until we were down Bellarine, seven years later Geelong were in the finals and they came out and

03:00 asked him would he play in the final. Now you can imagine he was 35 then and after not having played for seven years to come back and play, you can imagine, you can imagine them doing it these days. It said it was the longest game he ever played, I know I can't believe he did any good.

03:22 **Did Geelong win that final?**

03:26 I don't know. I don't know.

03:30 You can't imagine it, anyone not playing, tramping around the farm, which is about the worst thing, and not playing for seven years and then you come back when you're 35, can't imagine it. I got as far as having a couple runs with Geelong and

04:00 at the time of the practice runs I was playing tennis with Drysdale and they got in to the finals and I either had to play with them in finals or continue with the football with Geelong, well I had played with them all the year and got in to the final and I didn't like dropping them so I came back and played in the finals which we won and that was the end of my football with Geelong.

04:30 There was an uncle of mine said, "In on your Dad's reputation, and out on your own," probably true.

04:45 **What happened on the farm? What sort of farm? It was wool was it?**

04:52 Up in the Gippsland is growing onions and probably down Bellarine peas,

05:00 potatoes, onions and up in Drysdale potatoes and then went on to the flax.

05:16 **Can you tell us about your early years at school, any memories of those times?**

05:23 As I said I was a bit of a duffer [slow] at school.

05:30 When I first started school I was barely five, my sister, she was a year older and when they started us

together and I think right through a year too soon, and I never really did well. After the 6th grade at Drysdale I went in to the high school at Geelong and I never ever liked it, it seemed to be a different system.

06:00 I didn't like it all. Actually I had two years in the 7th grade, still didn't do too well. I remember after two years of algebra I got exactly nothing, I still can't believe it, nothing. I said to my mother and father, "Look I don't like it at the high school," it's a different system altogether, "Can I go to the junior tech?"

06:30 And I did that, I went to the junior tech, you won't believe this after six months I did an exam and algebra was my highest mark, it mightn't have been very high, but it was my highest mark. A different teacher taught a different way. I did a bit better there. My trouble was, instead of

07:00 concentrating on the schoolwork, I was out playing football, tennis and things. I finished up at junior tech intermediate and passed everything bar maths, I was pending in maths. What I used to do, I'd do woodwork then, and I loved that I loved making things and we

07:30 used to, so from then on I've always liked making things.

07:40 **Can you tell us also a little bit about your mother, what sort of a woman she was?**

07:47 She was a lovely woman and she lived at Portarlington, I might go back to her father now. He

08:00 was playing with Geelong, lived at Geelong, came from Geelong, and used to come down to Portarlington catch the [SS] Edina and go into Geelong to play. I don't know, say perhaps, he went there on a Friday night and then caught the boat on Saturday morning and he was always late and it happened this time

08:30 time the Edina pulled in and pulled out, it was on its way to Geelong and Dad came running down the hill and up the pier and the captain spotted him brought the Edina back, pulled in picked him up and off. Can you imagine that happening these days? He was always late. My mother she was very good with the piano

09:00 and nothing special about her. She played a little bit of tennis and mainly looked after us. I remember she was very upset when I went off to the war. When I got shot down she got Parkinson's disease

09:30 I believe it was through the shock. When I came home she had Parkinson's disease and she lived about eight or nine years after that and then in the end she went in to hospital to have a bit

10:00 of a break and get her medicine sorted out and after that she never came out. After about six weeks.

10:15 **Is it possible to describe to us what family, home life was like in the '20s?**

10:17 In the '20s.

10:25 **Yes in the '20s you had a brother and a sister, what sort of things you'd get up to?**

10:30 The '20s I myself, I left school about 1932 and living out in the country, that was the middle of the Depression, and there wasn't many jobs going and

11:00 so I finished up working around the farms picking peas and digging potatoes and finished up, three of us rode up to Ballarat, rode bikes up digging potatoes up there and we started, the three of us, I decided we'd just pool all the money and divided it up.

11:30 That didn't last long because it was my first time that I'd ever dug potatoes and I was the slowest out of 20 people in the paddock I was the slowest. They were digging and giving me money, they soon got jack of it [fed up]. Anyway I used to go, I'd stop and I'd go up and watch, what they'd call the gun, the fastest one, and pick up a few little hints

12:00 that I'd do, I go up the ladder a bit. I'd go up and watch again anyway after a couple of months there was only one other man who could beat me. I could dig as fast as him but I couldn't pick up as fast because he had big hands, he could pick up. That was up in Ballarat. It was pretty cold of a morning getting up out there.

12:30 Then we came home and same thing picking peas, digging potatoes and when the work had just about finished, seasonal, when the work finished at Drysdale another fellow and I said, "What are we going to do now?" Thrasher was just about to start and I thought oh well here goes, I'll be a thrasher.

13:00 Start four o'clock in the morning and work until eight o'clock at night. Now you hear all about these fellas seven or eight hours is too much, we were working 14 hours a day and still only, I was less than 20, pitching hay all day for 14 hours.

13:30 Anyway, came home, Saturdays we had an early day, we'd knock off at four o'clock in the afternoon and came home. A mate of mine was there waiting for me. He said "Look.." he'd started to learn wool classing, and he had one year he said, "On Monday we start next, what about coming in and learning

wool classing?"

- 14:00 So I talked to my mother and father about it and on Monday morning I was in starting to learn wool classing. I finished, they had the course there for three years we'd be there until about June and we'd go out to the sheds, roustabouting.
- 14:30 We went, a mate and I, went to a shed up outside Bendigo and we went by train and someone was meant to pick us up by car and take us out. Anyway there was no one there and we finished up we got a ride out on a horse and dray, so I said to my
- 15:00 mate, "I'm bit upset about her not coming" I said, "Congratulate me." He said, "Why?" And I said, "I've just turned 21." So we had the boys' wage which we would have got and full wage you get when you're 21. He said, "Congratulate me." I said, "Why?" "I think I'll turn 21 too." Anyway we had to sign an agreement, got the full wage anyway
- 15:30 he changed his mind, he got the boys wage. I rubbed it in. I was scared stiff ever since. From there we went to another station, just outside Geelong and the contractor in charge of all the team and I thought 'oh heavens, here's trouble'. Every time I looked at him he seemed to be looking at me and I thought 'any moment now'.
- 16:00 Anyway I got away with it, he never said anything. We went to another station down near the South Australian border and I was there, still had to say 21 everywhere we went the same fellow drawing up the contracts, of course you wouldn't believe what happened. Elections came along and we all
- 16:30 bundled in to go to Casterton and when they got to the place I couldn't go in, "C'mon," they said. "I can't go, I haven't got my name down on the rolls." "Aw you'll be fined." Anyway got away with it. I saw this, actually he was the wool classer, signed up all the contracts and I met him
- 17:00 in the restaurant and just happened to run in to him and I told him and he said, "Oh why didn't you tell me, would've been alright." I was scared stiff about him all the time and he said, "No worries." Then...
- 17:19 **How old were you, Bill, at the time?**
- 17:20 Oh I'd be about 22, 20
- 17:30 don't know exactly. Anyway, when I finished I went out and worked in the wool stores, what they call bulk classing, working in the stores and I did two or three years there and got experience and it was while I was there that I decided to join up and I wondered what
- 18:00 was I going to join? The army, I didn't like the idea of the bayonet, the navy I didn't like the idea of submarines I didn't want that, it looks like the air force. So I said to some uncles of mine, and he said, "Look they don't just take anybody in
- 18:30 aircrew you know." That was great I thought, I was a duffer at school and had been working around the farms all the time. Anyway I went up, and got called up for the interview, and I passed the medical, no trouble at all, then they came to they gave a few sums to do
- 19:00 they had multiplication with decimal points. Well it was eight years since I'd left school and I could multiply all right but I didn't know where to put the decimal points. I pondered over it for a good while, anyway I got it in the end and the next thing he gave me was long division with decimal points. Well, that was worse. Anyway I got it in the end. "Look I think you
- 19:30 know it," he said, "but I think you'd better go and brush up a bit and come back." I said, "All right." Now if I passed I'd be put on the reserve and wait until you're called up. So they had a course of 21 books, a reserve's course, I'd seen these and I thought now if I can get those first half dozen books,
- 20:00 that's exactly what it was for someone like me that need a bit of brushing up and so I said, "Where can you get those books?" And they told me around in Russell Street so I went around, went in to the office and there were two girls there and they said, "Yes?" And I said, "I'd like the first half dozen books of the course if I can." They said, "We can't give it to you,
- 20:30 the boss is out at the moment but he'll be back in a minute." I sat down and waited. He came tearing in, a real rush, up to the girls he had another interview and they said, "There's someone there to see you." And he swung around and said, "Yes, what can I do for you?" I said, "I want the first half dozen books if I can get them, I've got to brush up." And he said, "Are you on the Reserve?" I said,
- 21:00 "No." "Well I can't give them to you until you get on the reserve." "Well," I said, "I can't get on the reserve until I get those books." He said, "Well I can't give them to you until you get on the Reserve." I said, "I can't get on the Reserve until I get the books." And it went on like this. In the end he said, "All right, what's your name? I'll see what I can do, brush off." I said, "Grigg," and he looked at me, "Your not any relation to
- 21:30 Dickie Grigg the footballer are you?" I said, "Yes, he's my father." I can see him now, "Why didn't you tell me before?" His father was a trainer at Geelong and after the football match they used to come out to Drysdale and give Dad a rub down and Saturday morning they'd have a kick and not only gave me

the first six, he gave me the whole 21.

- 22:00 Well I thought '21' I'll go out the sheds and class some sheds, nothing to do at night but study this course. I did three sheds and studied and went right through the course. When I came back I got on all right. I got called up on the reserves and at night we used to
- 22:30 do this Reserves' course and, you can imagine, I'd done it all I knew everything and from being a duffer at school and because I was interested, I was interested in this I did real well. I think it helped then right through. As far as my brother, he was seven years younger than me and he was still at school. He was learning civil
- 23:00 engineering. My sister she was, nothing special she went to the high school for a while and came out and she had a job at the local grocer shop, paper shop.
- 23:22 **Bill can I ask you what wool classing involves? Can you tell us a bit about the job?**
- 23:28 The wool classing. That
- 23:30 was something I never did a lot out in the sheds I was just about, I went and did the wool sorting in the stalls, the stores, and I was there for three years and I was just about fully fledged then I was ready to go out and take on the sheds. So actually this time when I got the course and went
- 24:00 out and did three sheds out there and that was all I did out there. Down in the western district it was just beautiful wool and when I went, I finished up going over to Rhodesia, I asked them for a piece a bit of the wool to take with me, I'll tell you about that afterwards.
- 24:30 But there was two brothers first, I went to one fellow and I was sorting there, and the next place I was going to the farm there he was messing around in the bins looking at the wool 'shouldn't have that there' 'shouldn't have this there' and eventually when I got over to his place he was doing the same. He was coming around, now
- 25:00 I don't know if you know anything about wool but if, say it'd been a bad year all of a sudden there'd been a drought or reverse or sheep get sick, the wool gets a break in it. So we used to have to get a station and hold it tight and flip it in your finger to get a certain pressure on it and if it broke it's what we'd call 'tender'. Before I
- 25:30 left at the wool company they told me to be hard on the tender, it was it was a bad year and there was a lot of it, and he said the buyers are looking for it so if you've got anything doubtful put it out. So he had a fair bit of tender too and he was fiddling around all the time saying "this is not tender, this is not tender", He never had a thumb, you'd see how you pull it tight pull it tight and flip the station
- 26:00 well he used to get it like that and jerk it. Well it was probably alright but it wasn't properly. I got sick of him all the time saying, "This is not tender, this is not tender," and I didn't like to say, "Well you can't do it properly you haven't got a thumb," so what I said was a lot worse, I think. I said, "Look clear off you know nothing about the game." He stamped off and he went up
- 26:30 to the shearers and I could hear him now walking up and down "been in the game 75 years, and boy classer back there tells me I know nothing about the game'. He was one of those fellows that flare up and then five minutes later he's forgotten. Every night we used to go in and bring out a little jug, a flagon of wine, home brew, and he'd forgotten all about it. I'll never forget that.
- 27:00 Him saying "he knew nothing about the game'.
- 27:13 **Can you tell us a little bit more about those skills and little techniques that were required to be able to class wool?**
- 27:22 Well I don't know if you know anything about it, but the first thing
- 27:30 you have someone who picks up, when the shearers finish, pick it up and bring it around and throw it out on the table. Around the edges, around the feet and that they used to be a little bit greasy and the rollers would have to pull all that off and that became pieces and the fleece would
- 28:00 be rolled up and always the same spot would be up on the top when they'd finished up. Usually the shoulder, the best wool came from the shoulder and it was all different strengths. Those days they called it, well a strong wool a thick heavy wool would have a lot
- 28:30 thicker fibre and have a long and thick, almost as thick as a piece of cotton, until it got down that be around 40, 50 count and they got down 60, 65, 64 that was about the normal wool. Then it got down to Tasmania where the finest wool
- 29:00 came from, little short wool and down to 80 and 90 and the fibre was that fine you could hardly see it. So that's what we had to do. Count would be the first thing, down where we were it would be around

- 29:30 60, 65 and odd some on 70. Then you'd go on colour, the amount of grease, there's lanolin in the wool and some would be a lot heavier and lanolin would give it a yellowish colour and you had to go by the colour. Any stains and that you'd have to have them
- 30:00 taken out. The tender wool, you had to watch for that.
- 30:12 **How would you take the stains out?**
- 30:16 It's just a fleece and it's all loose and you'd just pull it out throw it in the bezel bin of stains, another bin for the grease
- 30:30 then the piece pickers, it would be there job to sort it all out. When they went around doing the fleece when it was laid on the table you had to be fairly quick about it and there would be a lot of good wool would go with the stain wool. The piece pickers would have to take that good wool out, put that in one bin, stain in another.
- 31:00 **Where would you be working, based in the shearing shed?**
- 31:08 Be in the shearing shed. The shearers are there, their board there, we'd have the wool table here and all the bins would be along there and the classer would throw it in to the bins. When we first started, we were
- 31:30 green and the shearers they'd put it over you. I remember I was standing there watching the 'learner', there were 25 shearers and they'd have a learner at everyone and anyway he'd cut bezel on this sheep, blood going everywhere, he looked up and saw me and he said, "Quick get the
- 32:00 pizzle guard!" I said, "What's that?" He said, "Never mind go down and get it." Through a door and down the steps to where they call the expert, the engineer used to look after the machinery. He was an old Scotsman. I said, "The learner wants a pizzle guard." "Oh," he put his glasses on and he looks up on the shelf, "Now where is it, where is it, oh here it is," and he had an old bolt, bent like that
- 32:30 I can see it now. I said to him, "What's that?" He said, "Never mind get up and give it to him, he's waiting for it." So I came up the steps, opened the door and I walked in and I'm holding up this thing thinking 'what the heck's this?' and I look up and here's 25 shearers standing there all waiting for me to come through the door with this bolt. We went to another shed then and
- 33:00 we moved over on the Sunday, and where I'd been I had a mattress, this is one of the first sheds I'd been to. When we got there, there were two shearers there, the first two and me, and they were starting to get their bed ready and I said, "Where do we get the mattress?" And they looked at me and said, "Oh you'll have to go up and ask the boss." I remember
- 33:30 it was a cold Sunday and I went up and knocked on the door and he'd been sitting over the fire and I said I was told to come up and get a mattress. I can see the look on his face now, he said, "Oh." Anyway he went away and came back with a mattress. So I went down there and they were ready to laugh at me, but I had the laugh because they stuffing straw in to
- 34:00 a chaff bag for their mattress and then I had a mattress. I had the last laugh. Anyhow I got my own back on him then, I started to wake up a bit. When we sat down for our lunch, our meal I got the loaf of bread and I started off that wide at the top and I sliced it down like that, I said, "Look I can't cut bread, I can't cut it straight, would you cut it for me?" All the time
- 34:30 there, for about three weeks, every time I wanted a piece of bread I'd say, "Cut me off a slice of bread." And then the last day of the last meal I said, "Look," and I cut it down straight and I said, "I got my own back."
- 34:49 **What was it like, you were working long hard days, once work finished what would the guys get up to? Outside of the shed, were you able to have a grog?**
- 35:09 None of us used to drink in those days. I don't drink much now, I never drank at all. Are you talking about when I was a thrasher? There wasn't much time once you started at four and finish at eight. By the time you had your meal, you had to have a meal before four o'clock and
- 35:30 then after eight o'clock, all you wanted to do was go to bed, we used to just curl up alongside a haystack and probably had our blankets and a bit of straw. There wasn't much time for anything else. We used to finish up Saturday, was an early day you'd finish at four o'clock in the afternoon. When I had the other
- 36:00 work I used to, Saturday, used to play tennis, cricket, football and I took on bike riding. Drysdale had a club and I joined it after a while I remember the first race I was going to go in, It was pouring rain and a beautiful
- 36:30 cup prize, I thought 'oh blow I'm not going to, I'm not going to ride in the rain, I'll start next week'. I never realised that I could have won it. I won the road the next week and I won it easy, the prize that day was eight shillings I remember. Anyway I finished up, I finished up on scratch.

- 37:00 When I first started I had an old bike, it was an old Massey Harris, actually it was my father's and it weighed a tonne and too heavy to ride in the races you get them now and you just pick them up like that, a bike. So then my brother-in-law, future brother-in-law used to come out on the weekend from Geelong to see my sister and he had a nice bike,
- 37:30 he had everything on it, he had carriers, mud guards, lights everything. So I used to all that off and ride then I'd have to put it all back on, it'd take half an hour or so, and I did that two or three times and I got jack of that so I'll ride an old bike. I knew that I couldn't keep up with them being a heavy bike, so I let my head go then and I bought a, I got
- 38:00 a Malvern Star, a new bike. I finished up on scratch, I could beat them all then. Two of them, they used ride off scratch too but I could beat them and they went in and joined the Geelong West club, amateurs. They said, "What about coming in?" And I said, "All right." So I came in one day, they didn't ask
- 38:30 me, these two were on scratch in there, and they didn't ask me what my handicap was or anything about me, they just gave me two minute start and I thought 'oh that's good'. I started off at the end of Riley Street and we had about two or three hundred yards to go and then it went down the deviation, well it was a 14 mile
- 39:00 race, out seven miles and seven miles back. Anyway I started out with two other fellows on two minutes and by the time I'd done this three hundred yards I was leading and I looked around to come and take a turn and they were about 50 yards behind. I was just riding along nicely, so I set off and caught the next bunch and
- 39:30 after I had a little spell and then I chased the next one. I caught right up to the leading bunch and I sprinted to catch them and then I pack peddled and I flipped the chain off and I was getting off all fingers and thumbs trying to get the chain on as quickly as I could, anyhow as the others were going past
- 40:00 they were saying, "Hard luck hard luck." And eventually I got it on and got going and started off back with the original two. I just did the same thing again, set off, set off until I caught up with the leading bunch, there was a lot of them had joined up and it was a pretty big bunch. I was frightened, the road where we first started isn't like it is now, it was metal in the potholes, and I thought if I've
- 40:30 got to sprint down there on those potholes the chain's going to come off again. So I had a look at the fellows and one fellow was riding pretty well and I said, "Any chance, how do you feel like making a break?" He said, "All right." So the two of us set off and we got the lead and we had to, coming in to Geelong before you'd
- 41:00 come down the hill, and that was rough metal, across there around here and up the deviation, they'd call it, a pretty long straight hill. So going down this metal road I had to slow up and watch my chain and he saw me and set off. Anyway I caught him again at the bottom of the hill and I had a little spell there
- 41:30 and had a sprint there, instead of sprinting at the along the rough metal road I sprinted there and left him and coasted down. I won it. My time was seven seconds slower than the scratch men the fastest time and I'd been off, don't know how long, putting that chain back on.
- 42:00 Well then that was the only race...

Tape 2

- 00:31 **You played cricket as well?**
- 00:40 While we were up digging potatoes at Ballarat they had a sports meeting at Drysdale and we came back, rode back and entered in these races, but there
- 01:00 were these fellows from Geelong, they came out and they were a bit better than we were and they won most of the races. We had a beautiful cup given to us and they kept that for the best aggregate school of the Drysdale riders and I tied for it with another fellow. As soon as the track
- 01:30 was on the football ground and as soon as the sports meeting was over they tore the track up and got it ready for the football. We'd tied so they decided that we'd ride off on the road. It was about nearly two miles out on the Geelong Road to whit we called the finger post. We
- 02:00 decided that we wouldn't sit in behind one another, just ride out one at each side of the road, the traffic wasn't like it is these days, and we'd turn around and come back the same way. Well, I'd worked it all out that I didn't think we'd be going fast on the way and it would all depend on the sprint at the finish and that's what I'd hoped and I geared my bike
- 02:30 for that and I used to go out past this place and there'd be a big long hill and I used to practice

sprinting, it was about four times as long as the sprint I used to do in the races . I knew I could do it. We rode out like we said and there was an old fellow and he'd gone out and we had to turn around him and when we came back we were just coasting along and

- 03:00 I can see him now, he had one of those bikes with the handles coming up like that and he was sitting up smoking a pipe sitting in behind us, I'll never forget that. Anyway when we got in to, all the races we had before used to start the sprint at the bottom of the hill and sprint up hill in to the middle of the town, well back further there was a
- 03:30 slope down and I decided I was going to start my sprint there and the last, I got to the last twenty yards of the downhill I jumped there and I got the benefit of the twenty yards downhill by the time he woke up that I was gone he was on the flat and I was ready to come up hill. Anyway it worked. I managed to beat him.
- 04:00 One of the last races we had it was a beautiful day and we rode out to a place called Curlewis about seven miles out and back and there was a record kept of the races and there were only two of us on scratch that day and I said, "Say we have a go at the record, it's a beautiful day." And he said, "All right." So we went
- 04:30 flat out and use to take it in turns to take the lead and when we got out at two or three hundred yards to go, before we turned around, and he should've been coming up and take the lead and I looked back and he was about 50 yards behind. I turned around and like a fool I waited for him. Away we went and I took the lead
- 05:00 and after a while I said, "Come on, take a turn take a turn." And he said, "I can't, I'm done." And he sat in behind me and never took the turn all the way home I'm going as hard as I could, nearly killed myself, tired myself out and came to the sprint in the end he came out and beat me in the sprint and he got the record. I don't know if I've forgiven him or not? But he got killed during the war so I can't be too hard on him.
- 05:30 **You were riding a Malvern Star in the racing what about the other racers , what did they ride?**
- 05:40 All different bikes. I think I was the only one with a Malvern Star. I had ideas of riding in the, they have two big races, the professionals ride from Melbourne to Warrnambool, the amateurs used to ride from Melbourne to Colac and
- 06:00 I had ideas of going in that to Colac in the amateurs. I rode, we had cousins just outside Melbourne at Donnybrook, it's twenty miles the other side, and that was an 80 mile ride and I did that a couple of times. Ride up stay the night with them and come back. I got sick of it. I was riding on my own. All the others they'd go off in a bunch and
- 06:30 have a good time talking and that. I got sick of it and gave it away. I reckon I could have won it, all depends on the mark I had. Anyway that was it, I gave it away.
- 06:48 **Bill, what about your cricketing career, how did that go?**
- 06:53 I never had a cricketing career. I played cricket for two years and my father was a good
- 07:00 cricketer and I often think about it. He never ever coached me and I used to play and all I'd ever do was try to hit a six every ball, instead of waiting for the one. I played for two years and the highest I made was seven and I said, "Blow it I'll give it away and I'll play tennis." If you miss the ball at tennis you're not out, at least you get your three sets
- 07:30 I had one highlight in the cricket. Drysdale were playing Arlington, they were the town next door and there was always great rivalry between the two towns. They had two good players, one of them was Ken Davis he was a beautiful athlete he could do anything he played football, cricket, tennis and he was good at everything,
- 08:00 and the other fellow was, they were in batting, and the other fellow was Vic Prophet he was a sports master at Geelong College, you can imagine he wasn't any harm either. We had three good fast bowlers they were bowling and these two were belting the balls all over the place, every ball sixes, fours and it was unbelievable. So they were good bowlers, but
- 08:30 these fellows were too good. Dad was captain and he threw the ball over to me, I nearly died. I'd never bowled, I wasn't a bowler. Anyway I was running up, stuttering away with my feet trying to get in to step all I was trying to do was keep the ball on the pitch and nothing else, I'd never bowled. You wouldn't believe it I got the both of them. I don't
- 09:00 know how it happened but they popped them up and they got caught square leg or the other side. I couldn't believe. That was the highlight of my cricket. I then gave it away and I took on tennis then. I'm glad I did because I enjoyed the tennis. Later on over in Rhodesia they love their tennis over there and I
- 09:30 bought a racket there and played over there.

- 09:35 **Did the opposite sex play a role in those early years. Were there girlfriends?**
- 09:42 I was terribly shy, that was my trouble. I never had, well I only had one girlfriend, the one that I married. That's strange too.
- 10:00 Over, it'd be about two miles south of Drysdale, there's a crater, what they call a basin, I don't know whether it's right but I reckon that a meteor must have landed there some day because it's got this big impression and on the sides all 'round, you can imagine it went there and the side came up, and I always
- 10:30 reckoned it was meteor, whether it is or not I don't know. Anyway my sister and I we had friends lived about half a mile away and my sister said, "We'll go up and have a yarn with them." There were three girls and a boy. We were up there talking and they said, one of them said, "What about we go for a walk up to the
- 11:00 basin." And said, "All right." Next door there was this girl, she was staying with her aunty, she lived somewhere else and she was staying there, and she was there and she, "I'll come with you too." So we went up and stayed up there for a while and coming back, my sister she was playing with, was walking with her friend and I was walking with
- 11:30 Les, was her name. And I was walking behind with her and talking away. We had a dance every Sunday night for the young people and I said, "Are you going to the dance?" And she said, yes she'd be there. And I said, "I'll see you there." We I had more dance with her then, the probably would have had if she hadn't had that walk. Eventually, I was taking her home, eventually
- 12:00 I married her. After the war, I was engaged her to her just before I left and we got married as soon as I got home. I often think how, like that, if we hadn't gone up for that walk and come back, I probably would never have married her. Different things I notice in life how some little
- 12:30 thing will alter your whole life. Another thing that I remember when we came from the war, my wife she was, she wasn't my wife then, but she joined the WAAAFs [Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force] while I was away and the day we got, she got discharged the same day as I did. We went up to Melbourne and got discharged. We came back on the train to Geelong
- 13:00 and her mother and father came and picked us up, we were married then that's right, they came back.
- 13:12 **Sorry Bill, we're right again, so you were talking about you both being discharged on the same day.**
- 13:19 We were both discharged and we both came down by train to Geelong and my wife's mother and father came in from Drysdale to pick us up. They probably did a bit of shopping,
- 13:30 walking around the streets they met a friend of his who was an estate agent and he knew my father-in-law was an old orchardist. Just as a matter of interest he said to him, "There's an orchard that's come up for sale at Wallington." If he hadn't said that my whole life would've been different. I was a wool classer before, but I didn't want to be, after we got married, didn't want
- 14:00 to be travelling away all the time. My father-in-law and I were looking around wondering what I could do, like get some land or something and because he'd said that there's an orchard come up for sale. That altered my whole life. It was on the way home he was telling me this, "What about, are you interested in an orchard?"
- 14:30 And I said, "No," I said, "I hardly know an apple from a pear, let-alone run an orchard." He never said any more. Next morning we had breakfast, it was a beautiful day I remember, he said, "We'll go over and have a look at this orchard."
- 15:00 So we went over, we called in he knew the orchardist over there, he called in and had a yarn with one he asked him about the orchard, 'no worry about the orchard' as it turned out it was the second biggest orchard in Wallington. There's me never knew an apple from a pear, let-alone run it. We went down, you wouldn't believe it, the fellow that had it that was selling it, we were in the same form at the high school at Geelong
- 15:30 when we were there. Anyway, I wasn't taking any notice he was talking to this Reg Jenkins, was his name, my wife and I were just tagging behind and looked around and it was apricots had just about finished, it was in January, and apples were just about ready to start. Every tree was loaded, it was a lawless crop that year.
- 16:00 I started looking around and I thought 'gee this is what we're looking for, a house just walk in walk out the house everything was there money coming in straight away', I started to prick up my ears. I said to him, "Do you think I can do it?" "Yes and I'll help you like an old orchardist," next thing we had an orchard.
- 16:30 I never knew how big it was, I remember it was in different sections and it had pine trees, the sun was facing in and there was a row of pine trees right along he back and in sections. One day I had an awful job trying to keep up with everything and I thought I'd finished one section and thought 'oh well that's

got everything in hand now'

- 17:00 I looked through the trees and old fellow had one hundred acres of bush alongside, I looked through this last row of pine trees to have a look at his bush and I see another section of fruit trees, another four acres. In stead of being well up with it I was right behind, flat out again trying to keep up. I'll never forget that.
- 17:30 Spraying was the big job. Those days you had to spray with arsenite of lead. You had to spray every 14 days. I had a horse and cart and had the engine up on top of the tank and it took me about three days to go and do the spraying
- 18:00 and we never had the water, had to bucket it out of the water hole, and I was pretty soft I hadn't worked for four years, and bucket up a hundred gallons of water and I thought 'gees what have I let myself in for?' Anyhow I was lucky, as I say you had to spray every 14 days and the fellow next door said, "I'll tell you
- 18:30 when you've got to spray." So the first time I remember when I finished up I said, "Thank goodness for that," and put the pump away, I'd hardly put the jolly thing away and he said, "Right oh," and it was a fortnight 14 days. "Right oh get the cart out again." And I said, "I've just done it!" He said, "You've got to do it every 14 days." Well it as lucky the next year, I had the arsenic of lead all that year,
- 19:00 and the next year DDT [insecticide] came out and with the arsenic of lead you had to be very thorough and cover every apple, if you left half the apple the coddled moths would get in and ruin. With the DDT you just drove the horse and card along and just brushed the trees as you went past and only had to do it
- 19:30 every six weeks. That was a different thing altogether. Then later on, I say I always like making things, and my brother he had an orchard and he had a, he'd just bought a sprayer that fitted on the hoist at the back and was concentrated spray,
- 20:00 so in the vat we had used to hold a hundred gallons. Well this one used to hold 20 or 30 and concentrated, ten times, so you just drove along the track and jus pressed the button as you went past the tree. Well you can imagine the difference.
- 20:23 **Can we take you back a bit, do you remember when you actually got your call up?**
- 20:48 When?
- 20:50 **Do you remember that period the feelings of the time?**
- 20:55 I was still working around potatoes and that
- 21:00 and had a wait of only a month or two for the call up. I say, I was working in Melbourne, Eaderly Mill, sorting wool and at night time doing the reservists course and learning Morse code, we used to go the railway stations and post office
- 21:30 and learn Morse code. Then eventually the day came, I think it was in July we got called up and we were taken down to Somers, it's right down on the coast, middle of winter freezing cold, the wind used to blow in, we were just up from the beach we were at drilling and we'd be cold.
- 22:00 we had a competition drill squads, I don't know how I forgotten how many squads there were, three or four squads and we had a competition for the best drill squad and we had to win it. Our sergeant, his prize for being the champion drill
- 22:30 squad was to take us when we went to Rhodesia and he was in charge his terrific went over on the [HMS] Queen Elizabeth back his prize.
- 22:46 **Bill at that time how well informed do you think you were about what was going on as far as the war was concerned?**
- 22:57 I'd,
- 23:00 I'd just met the girlfriend it'd been only a little while, I decided I wasn't going to go to war, didn't want to go. Anyway, my sister she said, "It's about time you joined up isn't it?" I thought 'a great sister
- 23:30 you are'. Anyway Dunkirk came and I thought 'it's time I joined'. I was going to tell you something and I've forgotten what it was. Sorry.
- 24:00 I've forgotten what it was. When we were down at Somers, I was playing football with Healesville then and the first week we came we had a week there and we had a fairly important match, I was playing with Healesville,
- 24:30 and this fairly important match came up and I loved it and I wanted to play and we were supposed to

only have leave every second weekend. We were supposed to stay in that weekend, and the sports officer came from Lilydale, it was only a few miles away from Healesville and I thought I'll, it'd be good to have a yarn

- 25:00 with him. I told him we had this important match is there any chance of getting away and play. He said, "Go up and have a yarn with the adjutant." So we went up, he told him that I wanted to play. We'd just had an exam, a test, of some sort and he said, "How did you go?" And I'd done all right and had a good mark
- 25:30 this is all because I got the 21 books they'd been a terrific help to me and I had good marks and he said, "All right, you can go this week, next week you'll have to stay home, when the others go you'll have to stay in." I said, "All right I'll take it now." And I went away and played. Anyway when the next week came I just marched out with everyone else, no one stopped me, no one said anything so then every week I'd just
- 26:00 the other's would stay in and I still went off and played my football. We got in to the, we played in the semi-final, and three quarter time we had the game won, we were in the final. The local president was the local chemist and he came around with little capsules of white powder in it
- 26:30 and he's handing them around and he came to me and said, "Do you want one?" And I said, "No I don't want one, I'm fit as a fiddle," because every day we had a cross country run, a game of football we were never so fit. He said, "It'll make you feel as though you want to jump over the goal posts." And I said, "All right just for fun." We only had a quarter to go. I said,
- 27:00 "All right, I had it." And had just the opposite effect on me, I went to pieces I had hot and cold shivers I'd been running along and the muscles here would cramp, and I'd be going like that, and never had it my life before and went to pieces. The next thing, I don't know what happened whether I got a kick there, but I could hardly walk.
- 27:30 I had to struggle to get off the field. I had a little Vauxhall Wyvern and I drove back to Somers that night. Sunday I couldn't walk, I was in bed all day, Monday I got up and went to sick quarters and he rubbed a bit of liniment on it. Tuesday the same, Wednesday I said, "I'm playing in a grand final on Saturday I've got to get this right." He started to put poultices on it or something, Thursday came I was limping,
- 28:00 Friday I was still limping, Saturday, I'd written to them on Wednesday that I doubt that I'm going to be ready to play and Saturday came no limp, I was walking along all right, but as soon as I started to run it just folded up on me, weak not strength in it. I went up and they were out
- 28:30 on the main street of Healesville with a bus ready to take us over and I could see the coach and the captain came down to meet me and they had grins on their faces 'see you're all right' and I said, "I might look all right but I'm not, I'll have a last try." We went over there was a town where we were playing and I got out behind the pavilion and went and had a run and I was no good at all.
- 29:00 Broke my heart. It was the only time I ever had a chance to play in the grand final and the only time in the years that I played that I hurt and couldn't play the next week. I could've cried.
- 29:17 **Any idea what that white powder was that you were given?**
- 29:22 After the war we were taken back to Healesville, I went in to the chemist shop and he was still there and I
- 29:30 said "I reckon you handing those things around cost you the premiership, because they got beaten by two goals, now we had a good full ford, he was good, and I used to play centre half ford, and we had a sort of thing going between us and when I couldn't play they brought him out to play centre half ford and had another full ford, and were beaten by two goals. I told him,
- 30:00 "I reckon if we'd been in our rightful positions we could've won it. You handing those things around probably cost them the premiership." I said, "Anyway what was it?" And he wouldn't tell me he said, "Oh just something I give the greyhounds." Any greyhound like me wouldn't have done any good, I went to pieces. Whatever it was, I don't think anybody else did, I didn't hear anyone else complaining
- 30:30 about it. Didn't do me any good. I could've cried, I loved football that much and then here the first chance of playing in a grand final and couldn't play.
- 30:50 **Can you tell us a bit about the situation at Somers, the training you were undergoing there?**
- 31:00 Well. A fair bit of it was drill and cross-country run or route march, or something. We had a fair bit of theory, flight theory and all that sort of thing. We had link trainers,
- 31:30 that's like an aeroplane cabin with all the, you used to work it just like as though you're in a plane, and had a spot up on the wall and you'd pull the stick back just as though you wanted to go up and down and across, the rudders, that was quite good we had a fair bit of that nearly every day.
- 32:00 We had, every afternoon we did something or other, one day we were down on the beach and they had a

greasy pole rigged up and I was up on that with another fellow and he had me going and I said, "If I go you go too." And while I was going I grabbed him and over we went and down and crashed on

32:30 to the ground, and I landed on my shoulder, crunch. I thought I'd broken my collar bone. I got sent up to sick quarters, that was about a bit after four, so sat me down, the doctor will be here soon. I sat there, I sat there until seven o'clock and the doctor hadn't arrived.

33:00 I was sitting there with what I reckoned was a broken collar bone all that time, and I thought 'blow them' and went off to bed. I went in the sick parade in the morning, "Oh, oh you were here last night weren't you? Where did you get to?" I said, "I waited from four o'clock to seven o'clock and I'd thought I'd broken my collar bone and I thought that was enough." Well you can imagine, he flew at me.

33:30 "You'll wait all night if we want you to." I never had much time for doctors, the only one I really liked was the one that eventually got on to the squadron, he was good. A lot of the other doctors I never had time for. I remember once I had a bit of a cold coming on and I went down to get a couple of Aspros [aspirin] or something to suck and

34:00 there was a, this was later on I had a commission then, and some, one of the ground staff fellows came too and he wanted, I'm not sure if he just wanted a Panadol and they said, "You go away and come back tomorrow at the sick parade," and I thought that was pretty rough. That sort of thing, as I say I never had much time for them.

34:30 They x-rayed my shoulder and I had what they call a separated joint. I had it in a sling, I couldn't drill, that was good see, just standard watch and everything I wanted to do I had to do with one hand. Make my bed, eat my meals, shower and all

35:00 that, I was slow. Where we used to get our meals there used to have a queue, a long queue, and there was a sergeant down there used to see that no one cribbed and got off, and I went up to him and said, "Look I've got this crook shoulder and everything I do is one hand, slow, would it be all right if I went straight to the head of the queue and got my meal?" He said, "OK yeah," so I did that. So for

35:30 a couple of weeks I had this sling I'd go up and get my meal and when the time came that I could do away of the sling, I took it off, but I didn't do away with it I put in my pocket. Every time I wanted a meal I'd come up around the thing, whip the sling on and right to the end of the thing go up and get my meal. The fellows that knew me they were going crook, no one ever

36:00 stopped me.

36:07 **So, how did a young rascal such as yourself deal with the discipline that was so a part of the training?**

36:14 I don't think we had any trouble with that. Only the last night we were at Somers, you had to sort of behave yourself. I don't

36:30 think, I can't remember anything, getting on to us. But at the last night at Somers they had a concert and most of the people went to the concert and some stayed home, in our huts, and I think we had a little game of 'crown and anchor' and then we

37:00 decided, what we did we got all the beds and just piled them up in the middle. The fellows in the concert came back and looked, then we had to put our own beds in there too. No good having our beds out and we said they must have, the hut next door, they must have come in and done it.

37:30 When they settled down asleep we organised, we got someone to open the door this end, a door each end, someone at the door that end two or three of us ran through and got the beds and rolled them over right through. Course you can imagine they came out roaring away. While we were doing that someone was doing it to the hut over there and we came out in to our hut, they came out and they thought

38:00 each other had done it. They were fighting their way, and there we were looking out and urging them on. There was that much row the guards came up and it was too much and just stopped the fighting and that and stood talking for a good while. We didn't let on that we'd done it.

38:30 **How did you get along with your superiors, your officers, and you talked about your squad sergeant? What sort of people were they and how did you all get along?**

38:41 I sort of never remember any troubles down there. We had the officers for lectures and things like that.

39:00 I never remember any trouble. One thing I do remember, when we finished up we had exams and the word had come through that we, the pilots were going to go Rhodesia and we had to be classified, air gunners, navigators, observers, pilots, and of course everyone wanted to be a pilot of course.

39:30 After the exams we were called up and we had to go in one at a time to this panel and they fired questions at you to decide what you'd be. Some had come out, we went in alphabetical order, and some of the fellows would come out and they wouldn't be told, we'd have to wait to be told,

- 40:00 some were 'pilot only' and they'd come out and they were wrapped 'we're pilot only', they got what they wanted. Eventually I got called up and went in and they asked me why did you join up, we had a lecture about what to say and some said they always wanted to be a pilot, they'd always wanted to fly, they said, "You'd want to impress on them that you want to fly." Didn't seem right I never ever thought I'd ever have an opportunity of flying, never thought about it. It was when they said to me, "Why did you want to fly?"
- 40:30 Well I just told them, "I didn't want to join up and we when Dunkirk came," I said, "It's time I went." I told them, "I didn't know which I'd be and thought of the army and didn't like the idea of the bayonet, and the navy didn't like the idea of the submarines."
- 41:00 So I said, "It's got to be the air force. That's how I came." They said, "All right," and I went out, no that's right I said, "You were in the unfortunate category of being pilot only," I thought, good. I went out and of course boasted to the others I'm going to be a pilot, and after a while I got called back in, "There's been a
- 41:30 mistake. The fellow before you was Greg..."

Tape 3

- 00:30 **Perhaps we could hear a little bit about Sergeant Britt and you could sing the little ditty?**
- 00:36 Yes, he was our drill sergeant and got on well with him and we went on the route marches sometimes it was winter, pouring rain, and one of the fellows he made up little ditties two or three times and one of them so I could remember
- 01:00 it all it was, 'It bloody rained, it'd bloody pour, bloody Brit did bloody roar.' That's all I can remember of it. It was good. We finished up the campion drill squad and his prize
- 01:30 for that was he was the sergeant in charge of us we went over to Rhodesia. That was his, he was a good fellow.
- 01:45 **You were talking about how you got to be accepted and qualify as a pilot and they mixed up the name, Greg and Grigg?**
- 02:01 Well that was it and I got called back in and they said that there'd been a mistake and it was 'Greg' and thought I was 'Greg pilot only', but now you're eligible for the lot.
- 02:30 So I had to go out with the others and wait until we were told. I think we were lucky at the time they wanted a draft for to go to Rhodesia, well I was a bit worried because I had this bad shoulder, separated joint, and it was a toss up whether I could go. Getting to the last day or two the doctor said, "Well can you
- 03:00 pick up that chair, if you can pick up the chair you can go, if you can't well you don't go." I made sure I picked it up and went. I would've been very disappointed because that trip to Rhodesia we were there for 12 months training and the people were absolutely marvellous to us we had a wonderful time. I
- 03:30 was playing tennis at the time at home and when we got over there they loved their tennis. All the tennis courts were made out ant hill crumbled up it was just like playing on lawn, it was beautiful to play on. There was another fellow and I we were about the same and we used to get up early every morning, nearly every morning, and go and have a game before we started
- 04:00 whatever we were doing for the day. The little black boys there used to water the court and line it fresh and then we'd have them as ball boys for a 'tickie', threepence, tickie was threepence, they called it tickie over there. It was great playing tennis and having ball boys.
- 04:30 **So before you got there can you tell me about leaving Somers camp and embarking on the Queen Elizabeth in Sydney and the trip on the Queen Elizabeth?**
- 04:48 We were, after Somers, we went to the showgrounds in Melbourne, the depot waiting
- 05:00 to go and we went by train from there to Sydney and we arrived in Sydney getting towards evening and we went on to a ferry, went down the ferry just on twilight, the lights, the first time I'd been to Sydney, and the lights were all starting
- 05:30 to come all around the harbour and we went down there and there was the Sydney Harbour Bridge, first time I'd seen it, framing the Queen Elizabeth and the [HMS] Queen Mary. We didn't know that they were going to be there. You can imagine the terrific sight the harbour, the lighting up the bridge and the Queen Mary and the, a sight I'll never forget. We went down and we
- 06:00 pulled in alongside to it and that's where you get the best impression of the size of the boats. While

you're on it you can only see a certain part, you can't get an idea of the size, but when you're down there looking up it's 80 feet from the water to the first deck and there was a door just there and that's

- 06:30 how went in to it and this door and when I went in there was a chap from Drysdale, where I came from, and he was in the army and they had about five or six thousand army there and he said, "He'd come down just to see if there was anyone he knew." And I was thrilled to bits to see him there. We often got together and had a couple of beers or something.
- 07:00 Then I just learned to play 'crown and anchor' when were down at Somers we went down to the hotel and we'd have a few drinks, I didn't drink much, but I might have had a pot and they started playing 'crown and anchor' and I had a win. I thought
- 07:30 'this is a good game' and so when I went on board I had the dice I bought a set of dice but I never had the board. On the train going from Melbourne to Sydney I played poker. I had 25 pounds when I left Melbourne and by the time I got to Sydney I'd lost 12, I thought 'gee
- 08:00 I'll have to be careful or I'll be broke.' On the Queen Elizabeth the back decks were just a seething mass of two up schools, which was illegal no gambling. I remember one day I was sitting on a deck overlooking these schools and the captain and the
- 08:30 CEO [chief executive officer] of all the troops and a couple of other fellows came along trying to stop it. They'd get to the first school, and when they got there they were stopped. Then they'd move on to the next one and it'd stop when they got there, but this one back here had started up again, and that's what happened they'd stop as they came around and by the time they got around it was just going, they'd have no hope of stopping it. Anyway I had a bit of a go
- 09:00 and I played very carefully I got, I think I was winning 19 pounds, and I don't, whether I'd got, you see I had 25 ponds when I left, well I was winning, 19 plus my 25, or whether I won the 12 and the 19. Anyway one night I was coming down, we were way down in the bottom oh it was hot,
- 09:30 everything was closed up with black outs and that, and it was boiling hot down there, anyway going down I came across this crown and anchor school, and two of our chaps were running it. I stood and watched them for a little while, a few minutes, and they said, "That's it, we're broke." They were having a bad run. Well I'd just won this 19 pounds and I thought 'my luck's in'
- 10:00 and in crown and anchor usually the banker always wins, nearly always. I thought 'my luck's in' and I said, "I'll run it if you like." Of course they couldn't get my hand quick enough, and I took out 15 out of the 19 and it wasn't long and it was all gone. I was nearly going to say that's it and I thought 'oh well I do the other four'. I had 30 shillings
- 10:30 left and the tide turned. I remember I was sitting on a life belt with my back against the wall and had the board there and it was going my way and I was pushing the notes in underneath the life belt and after a while they were starting to come out the side and I was doing alright. I remember the crown hadn't turned up for quite a while, and they were doubling up on it and there was a stack
- 11:00 of notes, they were that high, and I thought 'oh heavens it'll be', I don't know if you know crown and anchor at all, you've got the four aces and a crown and an anchor and see, that's six and a dice has got six sides on it, got one of those on each side, so you toss it and if say the crown turns up well you pay if it's
- 11:30 on the crown or the other two. Whatever doesn't turn up the banker collects. The banker has got the advantage, like normally if three different ones turn up, well that's even, pay three and collect on three. But if two turn up on the one coin with another
- 12:00 one, that is three, but you collect on four, or if three of them turn up you play on, you play three times but you collect on five. That's the advantage the banker's got. I thought this crown hasn't turned up for quite a while, three's due to turn up any time and I'll have to pay out three times on the spot and I was just about to throw, and
- 12:30 army sergeant came down and saw us and he said, "Stop that game immediately." I said to myself 'good oh'. To make it look good I said, "Can I toss for what's there?" I didn't want to, but he said, "No. Stop immediately." I had to stop. Then the next thing was I had to pick up this life jacket and here's all this money,
- 13:00 I had my 19 pounds plus 75 pounds that I won, 75 pounds those days was an absolute fortune for me. I thought oh well I thought 'oh well I'm going to run a school now' I had the dice but I never had the board so I went right down to the bottom where they had all the paints and canvasses and all that. There was an old fellow in charge and I said, "Any chance of getting a bit of a canvas?"
- 13:30 "Yeah." And he gave me a needle and a bit of string, made up an edge around it, a border and then I got the paint, battleship grey, painted all these other things on. That board now is over in the Drysdale memorabilia room. I made that on the 11th of the 11th month of 1941, I got that up on the top
- 14:00 and it's over there in the memorabilia room at the RSL [Returned and Services League]. I still go the RSL at Drysdale because that's where I joined because I lived there. By the time we finished, oh that's

right, I had that win I got to Fremantle and it stopped there, and I sent most of that home then and then I had the board and by the time I got

- 14:30 to Rhodesia, we were on the Queen Elizabeth and we went to up to Egypt, we were at Alexandria we were there about five weeks waiting for a boat to go down to Durban. I had about over a hundred pounds and one of the fellows, he was one of those fellows who would make a pound when anyone else would starve, Cleaves, he came up to me and
- 15:00 said, "Look you can buy Australian pounds off money lenders in the street, they've got a set-up and they've got a little table, obviously got the money there, and you could buy the pound for 67 piastas." Piastas were worth threepence, same 80 to the pound. We went to change one in the pay office, we
- 15:30 got 80 piastas for it. You could go down the street and buy it for 67. So I had a hundred pounds, so I'd go down and buy this hundred pounds, back to the pay office and get 80 for it, back for another lot, back for another lot. We had five weeks there, we had a real good time, sent presents home, bought cameras, never drew a penny out of the pay packet, it was
- 16:00 all this. Of course we couldn't do it all the time so we used pay our mates to go and do it, go and swap. I remember the last time I went there I said, "Look we're going down to Rhodesia," I said, "I've got all this Australian money what do you think I should do? Change it in to Egyptian or just leave it Australian?" "Oh I think you'd better change it." Went to town and got another lot.
- 16:30 Then of course they got to know us there and they came up and said we've got some English five pound notes, they were big things like that, ridiculous price, 67 was a big difference there, these five pound notes were almost, well I forgotten now what it was,
- 17:00 but they ridiculously cheap and they wanted us to buy some of them. I thought there's something wrong, you can't sell like that. And after the war was over, we never touched them, I read the story of Cicero, I don't know if you ever, no. He was a double spy, a spy for both Germany and us and I think they both paid
- 17:30 him. Finished up that he got paid by the Germans with counterfeit money and I reckon these notes that they were trying to sell us were counterfeit money. I don't know for surer but it was that cheap that it had to be something wrong and I reckon that's what would have happened, we'd have been coming up there with counterfeit stuff.
- 18:00 You can be lucky sometimes.
- 18:06 **That was Alexandria that you stayed at for five weeks and you were waiting for another ship, is that right?**
- 18:25 Yes that's right. The first night we arrived at Alexandria we went in,
- 18:30 we were in a transit camp just outside and we were going in to town from the camp out and the crowd ahead of us all of a sudden there was commotion and we got up there and one of the fellows, a barrage balloon had broken loose, and the cable was dragging along and it hooked around the leg of one of the
- 19:00 fellows and he came up a culvert, like that, his leg was there and the cable cut his foot clean off. He came home, sent home he got an artificial foot and he still flew. He lived just over here, the other side of Lake Killawarra over there. I don't he might be still there, I don't know. How unlucky can you be?
- 19:30 We went in to the town and we were having a meal there, a NAAFI [Navy, Army, Air Force Institute] they called it and while we were there someone came in and said the [HMS] Barham has just been sunk. Italian divers had come in and planted mines on it. She was sunk in the harbour the first night we were arrived there. We were having this meal and really nice and there was an English woman and she was looking after our table, a volunteer, and
- 20:00 she said, "Would you like some fruit salad?" "Ooh yes." She brought it out and said, "How's that?" I said joking, "Oh terrific it'd be nice with some cream on it." The last thing you'd think of getting cream over there, and she said, "I'll see what I can do." And you wouldn't believe it what she came back with a plate and it had
- 20:30 a slab of cream on it, it was like a cake it was about that size and that high. It was pure white. I felt like saying, "What is it? What is it?" I said, "Camel's cream?" Just to see it was nearly enough to make you sick. When I told her it was camel's cream, they nearly heaved. The thing was we had to eat
- 21:00 it because she was hovering around and she was that pleased to bring it to us, we had to, well when I said it was camel's cream it was just about the end.
- 21:30 **You were going down to Durban, what ship did you get and was it a long journey down to Durban?**
- 21:46 It wasn't real quick. We pulled in to a place, my memory and names, going down the Red Sea there was a place on the African side they pulled in

- 22:00 there. We weren't allowed ashore. They came down and we pulled in to Durban. On the way down the Red Sea we had Christmas there going down the Red Sea, one of my mates he brought a roulette board, he was running that
- 22:30 and I happened to notice that every now and again there were two numbers that used to turn up fairly regularly, 19 and 25, I still remember. I had a shilling on each one all the time and he'd be just starting to build up a bit of a bank and one of these would turn up and he'd have to pay 35 to one. I was doing alright. He lost and
- 23:00 then someone else would run it later they lost. It got that way in the end everyone wanted to play at winning but no one wanted to run it. We said we'll have a roster, everyone has to run it for so many goes, I don't what it was six or 10 goes, and the other one. You won't believe it, I was the only one, when it came my turn I was the only one the running of it.
- 23:30 No one would play with it. Someone told the crew on the ship about this game and they said, "We'll come up and run it." Couldn't get them up there quick enough. They lost. The last we heard of it, it went overboard outside Durban. On the way down, sorry we went to
- 24:00 this place in North Africa, Aden, and then Mombassa and they pulled in there and we were allowed ashore. I had a sore throat so I went to the medical officer to get a couple of Panadol's, Aspros, instead of giving them to me and letting me go, they bunged me in to hospital, I couldn't go ashore.
- 24:30 I was a bit crooked on that because I knew that I could. At anyway this fellow that I was telling you about, he'd be good to interview Bernie Peters was his name, he was Victoria's junior champion diver. He and another fellow went in and there was a bridge there, a hundred feet, both of them were diving off this into
- 25:00 a hundred feet, I couldn't believe it. All the natives were watching them every time and they were yelling out "Do it again, do it again." He told me afterwards his shoulders were absolutely red raw from hitting the water, you can imagine. Dive from a hundred feet, they were game a lot gamer than me.
- 25:30 We got to Durban, we sent out to a transit camp just outside Durban and we got settled in so many to the tent and by the time we got all our gear in there was no room for us in it. Anyway we got off in to Durban, got in to a taxi and we pulled in and before we got out of the taxi another car pulled ahead of us and a fellow got out
- 26:00 came back and said, "Hello Aussies, what are you doing tonight?" Turned out he was Australian, had been there for about five years, as far as I can remember, he'd been there. Anyway he came and took charge and took us to a hotel and drinks and that and took us home. Met his daughter, and she, there were six of us, and they got together, they were like her friends go to a party, went to
- 26:30 had a dance at a place at Anthelone Garden, it was a beautiful place. It had an outdoor floor and an island of gardens in the middle, all these lights, a beautiful night it was. Finished up we were there a week, they looked after us gave us a terrific time, round a
- 27:00 barbeque. Took us up in to the hills and a barbeque, never took any, all they had were a few sausages, bottled sauce and a bit of bread and butter, probably had a knife to cut the bread, that's all. You had to look after yourself, it was the best barbeque I've ever had I reckon. You had to get a stick and put your sausage on that and cook it yourself, if you burnt it black that was your fault you had to eat it.
- 27:30 Pull out a knife to spread the bit of butter, that's all there was. I really enjoyed that. Then they took us along the beach, we had swims there. In amongst the rocks they'd built a pool in amongst the rocks the waves used to come in and flow over the end so that there was fresh water coming in all the time, some would come some would go out. Beautiful
- 28:00 swim in the pool, I had a wonderful time there. Then the next thing was we had the train trip, how long it took, two three four days, to get up there. Pulled in at Johannesburg on the way and different places. The train, each compartment there was
- 28:30 six beds, three beds in each, you had the seat that was one bed and the back used to come up and made another bed and the top came down and made another bed there. Had a table here, you could play cards, it was that set-up it was terrific because you could do want you want. Four could play cards if they wanted to, two could sleep up there, or three play cards room for three,
- 29:00 you could do whatever you wanted to, they were terrific those trains. I don't remember much about what else went on. We got to Bulawayo first and we, like, had to wait then until there was a course doing flying up at Belvedere
- 29:30 we had to wait till that course was finished before any of us went. There were only so many and I don't think I was in the first lot. According to our, yes I nearly made the first lot, according to our results of the exams back in Somers, you wouldn't believe it the last ones to go
- 30:00 were my mate and myself, exactly the same score right to the decimal point. They called us in and asked us what we wanted to do, both of you want to stay here, because they knew we were mates, or do you

want to toss who goes. Of course we were dead keen to get to flying so we said we'd toss. 'Course I lost this mate, he went. Anyway,

30:30 before they went someone got sick, so I got in and I went. It was a place called Belvedere where we started flying on the Tiger Moths, do you want me to go on like this?

30:47 **How long were you at Bulawayo for?**

30:50 We were there, I can't tell you exactly, I'd say about five or six weeks waiting.

31:00 **Were you doing any training at all?**

31:01 No, no only the, I think we might have done a little bit of drill. Mainly it was this theory, the same as we'd already done at Somers, so we were doing that again to fill in the time.

31:19 **Was that navigation and meteorology?**

31:22 Yes, sort of flight training and navigation and things like that, theory.

31:30 Most of the time we went swimming. They had beautiful swimming pools there. Of course we went to the dances, we met some girls, arranged to go swimming and as we were walking around the place, I think I'd had a swim there, they had a diving platform about 15 feet and I was talking up big and said, "As soon as we go there we go straight to the dive platform

32:00 and dive in." I was only joking because the highest I'd ever dived before was about 6 feet. When they got there they marched, they all climbed up, I thought they were going to climb back down again, and I'm the last one left. I thought I've got to go, I can't climb down, so I went 15 feet. I'd love

32:30 to do high diving, it's a terrific feeling going through the water, but I'm not game. Actually, when we left Italy to come home, we left Taranto by boat and we went to Haifa and then down to Egypt, well in Haifa we were in the harbour there and there wasn't a breath of wind and it was hot, hot humid, and we weren't allowed

33:00 to go down, we had the steps down for the captain when they went ashore on a boat, we weren't allowed to go down to swim but we were allowed to come up. Another fellow there, we were dying to have a swim, I said, it was 30 feet from the thing to the water, down in Rhodesia I'd got to 20 feet, 30 feet another 10 feet

33:30 it was terrific, I said, "have you ever dived from 30 feet." He said, "Yes, but it was a long time ago." "Well," I said, "you go first and I'll follow you." He goes, you see him, it was like glass the water, but when he went it sort of disturbed it you could see the water. So he went and I didn't hesitate, straight up and in, if I'd stopped and looked I wouldn't have gone. It was terrific feeling the water flashing past you.

34:00 So we had our swim and we were allowed to come up. At Bulawayo we had the job of guards, to do something at night. On Saturday I was on from one o'clock until the morning.

34:30 So I went to the dance and came home just in time to go to the guard. Because I'm a great sleeper, and it wasn't long and, there was practically no one coming in then, I had a shelf and the next thing I was asleep. I woke up and went outside and there were the MPs [military police]. I thought 'oh heavens'

35:00 I don't remember, at the time, I couldn't remember walking out, I almost did it in my sleep, I thought 'oh heavens I'm gone' sleeping on duty. They never, they let me through, never said anything, so I just went through, you've got to be lucky sometimes.

35:26 **Is there anything more that you can recall about your training, your pilot training at Bulawayo?**

35:31 Well we started off, two of us shared a plane, a Kittyhawk, and I was lucky I had an Australian instructor and he was good fellow, we got on well together.

36:00 I got on very well straight away and it was a Friday and we finished he said, "You're ready for solo now." And the record in Rhodesia was three and something hours, he said, "On Monday we'll go up for a quarter of an hour

36:30 and then you have the CFI's [chief flying instructor] test and you pass that and you can go off and be a quarter of an hour ahead on the record." Sunday, we'd met some friends, girls, a bunch of us and they took us out to what was called Mermaid's pool, a beautiful day it was,

37:00 and this was like a fairly big dam I suppose about four times the size of this house, see the area. There was a little stream running in to it and like a rocky slide down and we used to get a bag and sit it up and sit in the water and slide down. Bash in to, often you'd be putting the bag there

37:30 and you'd slip and you'd roll down and your arms your hips and things would be bashing in to the rocks.

They had diving boards there, they had a cable from the top of the tree and used to be able to hang on to it and come down, bash in to the water, got sunburn, we were all day there. Monday morning, woke up, you can imagine stiff as a board. He said,

- 38:00 "What the heck have you been doing?" That was the finish of going for the record, dear I was disappointed. Another time, I've got photos up there, at the uMlazi dam, one of their big dams, they took us out there and I must have got nipped by a mosquito and
- 38:30 I was flying in the morning and we came and we had a lecture after lunch, and I was feeling real crook and I started to perspire and had a temperature and I thought I was getting the flu. Anyway I had to go, I went to sick quarters and I'll tell him I think I've got the flu. He said, "Where have you been?" And I told him this dam and he said, "You've got malaria."
- 39:00 Next thing I was in bed. Sweat, they piled all the blankets on and sweated away. I was in there for a few days and the instructor came in to see me and said, "Get down and see if we can catch up, make up for it." I got out of bed and went down, and I don't know why or how it happened, but I had
- 39:30 a crook muscle there I had a walking stick and I went down all the flights to see him. "What have you done?" I said, "I don't know what's happened it's there." He said, "Oh well that's the end." You know I was too far behind to catch up because I was crook the same time. I had to go back to Bulawayo then and I had 25 hours up then. There was another fellow he went back with me
- 40:00 he'd had an operation behind his ears, what are they called mastoids or something. When we had an interview he said, "You're half way through the course." And they said it's different to what we'd already done, they'd advanced it, they said, "You can go and have a go and if you pass you can go back with them, if you fail you go back to the next course,
- 40:30 if you fail that you're finished you're out." I thought 'well we're going to have a go' I was a bit of a duffer about all this sort of thing. I stayed and studied every minute I had to have a go, and the other fellow he was brilliant, he never used to study at all, went off dancing every night, no trouble at all he just flew through the exam. Anyway, I passed
- 41:00 and we all went back. We finished there and by then we'd met some nurse at the hospital, they had a tennis court at the hospital, and we played tennis backwards and forwards, we had a great old time. Next thing we moved from, oh that's right, one of the fellows he organised a sweep
- 41:30 for the first to go solo, we didn't know until afterwards he'd already gone solo, home in Australia anyway he didn't win it, I happened to win it first off in the best time. I'll tell you, perhaps I shouldn't tell you, they had three of them that used to knock around together
- 42:00 one a tall chap...

Tape 4

- 00:38 **When was the first time you flew, was it in Alexandria?**
- 00:43 We were in this transit camp with the aerodrome across the road and they had the old, Handley Paige bombers or something, the big bi-planes with four engines and we were over there
- 01:00 and the pilot came up and we were there beside it and he said, "I'm just taking it up for a test, would you like to come up?" "Yes," and we all hopped in. We were way down the back and we were only up for 20 minutes, I was nearly, near as a touch, sick because the thing used to waffle along and the tail was going up and down like that. We got down after only 20 minutes and I was near as a touch sick and I thought gee,
- 01:30 this doesn't sound too good. Anyway never, I don't think I ever got sick again. Different altogether when you're flying.
- 01:44 **Bill, down in Bulawayo did you do any actual flying training?**
- 01:52 No. No flying until we got up to Belvedere.
- 01:57 **Was that Tiger Moths?**
- 01:58 Tiger Moths for the start
- 02:00 I went all right on the Tiger Moths, night flying, the first time I did night flying the landing wasn't too bright but anyway I was all right after that. Then we went to moved across to Salisbury, just outside Salisbury, and another aerodrome called Cranbourne the other side,

02:30 we went on to Harvard's there. I went fairly well on them except I did a twizzle there.

02:41 **What's a twizzle?**

02:43 A twizzle is, you've seen planes going along flying and they've got a cross wind, the winds coming this way and instead of going there well to go there, like the wind carries you so to go there, they've got to point, they're pointing

03:00 there, like that. So when you come in to land you come in like that, now what you do just as you touch down you give the rudder a bit of a flick and go straight. If you don't what happens you're landing like that and the tail wheel is on a swivel and it's pointing that way and you're pointing that way so that spins it around and

03:30 you're still going fast enough that you upend a bit and your wing tip digs in and you spin around and do a twizzle. Of course fellows used to do it fairly regularly it would happen, they'd come in looking pretty sheepish, we'd laugh at them, "Don't know how you do, how you do it, tells us all about it?" I learnt a lesson there,

04:00 never laugh at anybody else's misfortune. I remembered it ever since, as sure as eggs it'll happen to you one day an it happened to me this twizzle. Of course I came in the one's I laughed at they really gave it a hoist and all the others and as I say, it was a lesson, never laugh at anyone else's misfortune. It doesn't do a

04:30 lot of damage they just put a new wing tip on that's about all. My instructor, I thought he'd go mad and he said, "No worries. You've done it, you'll never do it again, you'll know." I never.

04:45 **Was that in the Harvard?**

04:46 In the Harvard, yes.

04:49 **How did the Tiger Moth compare to the Harvard to fly?**

04:54 Oh well, different all together. It's like

05:00 getting out of a truck and getting in to a sports car or something like that or a car. Big difference, more power and speed and everything. I had one day I was very disappointed about we had a cross-country

05:30 they gave us the map and we had to go there. I got on well with my instructor, because I had two good fellows, on this day I was with someone else and when we got airborne, we had no intercom, and couldn't talk so we came, had to come here

06:00 and down there and to a little town. Well there was the track, I don't know what is was now a lane, a road or something and the line they had was there, and when I turned I went down there. When I got there, there was about half a mile down to the town or wherever it was we had to go to and I thought

06:30 well 'strike me pink, it's not worthwhile going from here to down the street', instead of going there, if we had the intercom I would've said to him, "Now, there it is do you want me to go down there or not?" And I thought it's stupid going there and back so I turned and went there. I did make a mistake here because towards the end here there was a hill on the map, I got to about here and there was like, it looked

07:00 the same on the map, a hill and I turned towards it and I woke up and thought it couldn't possibly be I hadn't been flying long enough, and I turned and went back and did the same thing when I got there I came to a railway line and I had about a half a mile down to the station I was to go, I thought 'it's not worthwhile going to' so I turned and came up here and I was right

07:30 from then on. They used to have to write a report each time and we used to sneak in and have a look at the book when there were no instructors around. I went in and had a look and he'd got 'lost all the way' big letters underlined and that. I should have

08:00 spoken to my instructors and told them about it, but I couldn't very well say I'd been in and had a look at the book and that so I never said anything. When we finished, I did a few pretty good things one place we were, it had a grass aerodrome or just a landing strip and it had a white line across it and the whole idea was

08:30 we'd be flying along at about 10,000 feet and they'd cut the engine, we had to glide all the way in to a force landing. The idea was you had to land as close as possible to that white line as you could, if you could land on the thing. I came, you wouldn't believe it, I landed right on the line. He said, "You landed right on the lines, terrific." He was thrilled to bits.

09:00 When we finished that course he came to me and he said, "We've given you above average, you had below average, average, above average, exceptional." And he said, "We're giving you above average, we'd have given you exceptional except for." And I never caught what he said. I know now,

09:30 I thought about it afterwards it was about this 'lost all the way', from that. If I'd have heard it I would have told him and asked him to give me another go, and I would've told them that I never had any intercom. It would have been alright if it had had an intercom. I've

10:00 kicked myself ever since because 'exceptional' was only very few got it. I miss it because of that.

10:10 **When did you crew up?**

10:24 No, you don't have a crew, we flew on our own, we were in singles. It shows you

10:30 how lucky you can be. I got malaria and I had to go back a course. Now I say everyone wanted to go on to singles, fly singles, most of that course went to England and they had to convert on to, just the time they were having the thousand bomber raids and they wanted bomber pilots. If I hadn't have got malaria

11:00 I would've gone with them and most of them, I don't know how many but half of those at least never came back. I struck those bad roads. Because that mosquito bit me I still alive, I may have still been alive I may not have. You've got to be lucky sometimes. So when we left there

11:30 we went back up to Egypt, three times I had a chance of going to England and I missed every time, every time was back to Egypt. Now Rhodesia is 5,000 feet up, difference in the air pressure. Don't ask me why, but you've got the throttle, so every time we had to start we had to push the throttle so far forward

12:00 and nothing happened, you went from there so all the time we did that. So when we got to Egypt to do our OTU [Operational Training Unit], that was the next thing, we were going to convert on to the Kittyhawks, hadn't flown for two or three months and we'd go up with instructors for a couple of hours in a Harvard, they'd so, "Right oh, start her up take her off."

12:30 Well the first thing I did like that, it nearly jumped straight off, down on sea level, he said, "I waited for that," he said, "Without fail everyone who comes up from Rhodesia does that." So we had a couple of hours flying and the next morning we were going off in the Kittyhawk, actually it was a Tomahawk, same thing.

13:00 And he said, "Now, you'll be going off first four o'clock in the morning." It was that hot they used to fly from as soon as you could see until about 11 o'clock and then they'd finish up. No more flying it's that hot. He gave me all the instructions the night before, "I want you here at four o'clock." Gave me all the chin on the Kittyhawk

13:30 and the last thing he said, "Don't go slamming that throttle open, just ease it open gently." So I went out, almost in the dark, and normally there's two big runways, the main runways, but this little thing was a short runway across, the wind was that way, the prevailing wind was generally this way, but this morning the breeze was this way and went

14:00 out on to the short runway. When it was light enough I was the first off and I remembered what he said and just eased it open and the difference in the power between a Harvard and the Kittyhawk, you can imagine, what I thought being used to the Harvard, I probably only gave it the same power and

14:30 just easing it opened and I finished up I was taxing for a fair way, never even had the tail up until I woke up. I was too slow on this short runway. Actually we crossed over these others half way down the run. I had to make up my mind, I didn't know whether the other fellow was coming behind me, what I should have done was stopped and come around, but I thought the other

15:00 fellow, I slammed it open and could see the end of the runway coming up and barely had enough speed when I hit the end to get airborne, well I had to heave back in the last yard and came up, and when you're a bit short on speed it comes up and then you sink back in.

15:30 I sunk back a little bit, I would have been all right, you wouldn't believe it there was row of stones right across the line about 50, 100 yards past the end and I came over and wheels hit that stone and sort of, I was lucky because, when in the flying position the propeller is only about that far off the ground. The propeller must have,

16:00 if the propeller had hit it I don't know what would have happened. Just the wheels pushed me up and I stayed up an got airborne and got up a bit and went to pull the wheels up and we've got a little indicator inside shows you about half way up, 'mm not too good' so I went to put it down and they never went down properly, well 'lovely'. We'd just had a lecture from the CFI, there'd been a few prangs and he said,

16:30 "The next one in an accident scrubbed straight away." "Oh lovely!" I had to call up the control and told them what happened and they said, "All right, put your wheels down and come in and fly over we'll have a look." I put the down they said, "No, they're not down properly."

17:00 And then they stopped all the others flying around, no one came in to land or to take off while I'm doing this. One fellow listening to what was going on and he forgot to change over and he ran out of petrol and he turned around about 200 miles down the runway and bit of plane flying everywhere. I had to

come in again with the wheels up, "They're not up."

- 17:30 They got another fellow one of the instructors he came up he flew alongside me took me over and I had to land with wheels up on a dirt runway. When I came in, I had to go and see the CFI, chief flying instructor, and, "All right tell me what happened." Well I told him all about it going up being on a short
- 18:00 runway. Then I said, "I think it's criminal having that heap of stone across the end of the runway." "All right," he said, "I hear you made a good landing so I won't scrub you, I'll put you back a course." "Oh heavens." You lost all your mates and that, I'd lost them with the other lot and we were the last of the Australians there
- 18:30 then next they'd been all RAF [Royal Air Force] fellows. I was going down the outside walking down the passage and he came out and sang out, "Come back, I hear you made a good landing," he said, "You can stay with the others."
- 19:00 **Can you tell me about the landing? When you had to land with you wheels up?**
- 19:05 They call it a belly landing. Well there's no wheels and you just come along like that, like a skid you just skid along and it bends, the propeller hits the ground of course and bends back. Makes a bit of a mess, but I got away there was really no trouble at all with it, I got away with it.
- 19:30 I had another very narrow escape at that place in the Harvard. This fellow I tell you, he'd be good to interview, he was talking and telling us, we used to at night get in our beds and talk about what happened during the day, and he was telling us about an instructor who'd come back from the squadron and he 'd done his tour
- 20:00 and came back and he was instructing he took this fellow up and he was doing most of the flying, doing aerobatics and all sorts of things and he flew up, like that, until it stalled speed dropped off went in to a spin brought it out and came down and, this fellow said, the pupil's up in the front, he said, "You know we're getting down pretty close to the deck,
- 20:30 and he said he's wanting to pull it out himself." Couldn't very well do it with the instructor there doing it, pulled out and he's telling us this, and you wouldn't believe it, the next day I got the same fellow and we went up and he did the same, most of the flying, did aerobatics and did this same thing went up until it stalled, went in to a spin, spun down, came out and he kept on going down, I was like this other fellow
- 21:00 wanting to pull it out I was getting that close, and all of a sudden I heard a yell behind and he pulled out, you won't believe this, but in between the palm trees I looked out the side and we were down below the tops of the palm trees, we were that close. I heard him say, "Take us home." I flew home and landed, got out and he was shaking like a leaf and was white as a ghost, what had happened
- 21:30 he'd said, our intercom wasn't working and I was just catching an odd word trying to make out what he said, he'd do this, go in to a spin and he wanted me to pull it out. What happened as it got its speed up it came out itself and we were going down and we were both sitting there thinking the other one had it. I was, because exactly the
- 22:00 same thing happened to my mate that's why I was thinking he had it, he was thinking I had it, and then it got that close he thought a pupil doesn't do this and he let out a yell and he heaved it out and it was that close. You've got to be lucky sometimes I say. The next
- 22:30 I had the prang there and we went along to past Tripoli, in to Tunisia, Libya mainly in what they call training flight. There was a pool of pilots waiting to go to the school, we'd done all our training, but we did a bit of flying while we were waiting to be called up.
- 23:00 What was I going to tell you? We waited a few weeks flying and then eventually
- 23:30 the squadrons were over in Sicily then the time comes we're going to join them and we flew, we were in to Tripoli and we were going in a DC-3 across to Sicily and we were just getting in and the fellow came up and said, "Look, there's six Kittyhawks to go across to Sicily to the squadron would you take them?" There were six of us did that
- 24:00 and we got over there, Pacino was the name of the place I think, we got out of the plane and another fellow came up and said, "Look the squadron's gone across to Italy." And he said, "There's six Kittyhawks to go across there," and would we take them. So we hopped in and I'm taxing out and I haven't got a wireless, the wireless was useless,
- 24:30 so that's all right I'll just tag along behind and got airborne and went to pull the wheels up, nothing happened. No hydraulics. So you've got a manual, you've got a lever where you've got to pump, pump, pump them up. That's all right, I get over there I'll just tag along behind them and pump it down and when we
- 25:00 got there it was not runway, it was just a square, like a big square field no runway and dirt, planes taking off, planes landing everywhere and anyway they did a few circuits and all of a sudden I see their wheels down and I pump mine I pump, pump, pump and you pump until you can't pump any more. That means that your wheels are down and locked. Well I kept on

- 25:30 pumping and pumping and it was still pumping, they were down but not locked. I haven't got any wireless to call up and say what's happened. The others went in and landed and I'm wondering what I'm going to do. I had a choice either land with my wheels up and I didn't want to go and land in a mess, arriving at the squadron, I
- 26:00 wondered if I kept pumping the hydraulic pressure I built up would that be enough to hold it. I thought I'll try that. I came in I was landing and coming along beautifully and I thought 'good, I'm going to make it'. Well then when the lift came off the wings and the weight came on to it, it folded up and the wing dug in a bit and the propeller got all bent. I don't know now
- 26:30 what I should have done, whether I should have made a belly landing or what. I think probably less damage this way. We, the two of us got called up to, Brian Eaton I don't know if you've ever heard of him, he was CO [commanding officer] of three squadrons, there were six squadrons altogether, two of them Australian.
- 27:00 Three were all Australian and I was on 450 and they were a mixer. We had Canadians, New Zealanders, South Africans and a few English and Australians, mainly Australians and it was better I thought that way, good. Anyway this Brian Eaton he was acting group captain for the day for the whole wing, and had to go up and interviewed him, "What's your name?" "Grigg."
- 27:30 "Oh you're the chap that pranged," lovely. "Well what squadron do you want to go to?" 450 we wanted to go because it was mixed and he said, "All right, Jack Bartlett's the CO don't know whether he'll want you or not," lovely. We went there, "All right, what's your name?" "Grigg," "Oh you're the chap that pranged." And,
- 28:00 "What happened?" And I was telling him and the engineer came and he said, "Don't worry, it's not your fault." What happened you make a heavy landing, the pressure comes on, there's a locking pin and it bends it and when you go to put it back instead of going in it won't go in, that's what's happened. When you make a heavy landing
- 28:30 you should report it. Now probably the ferry pilots, made some heavy landings and never reported it. Anyway all's well that ends well. When the engineer said it wasn't my fault the locking pin was bent it was alright. Later on we, oh that's right, on the next day I go off on the first trip
- 29:00 and I got about half way to the target, and it's like a car where the plugs oil up and you start missing, running rough and missing and flames belching out of the exhaust. The same thing, I didn't feel like turning around and on my first trip any other
- 29:30 trip well all right but the first trip I thought it wouldn't look too good if I pulled out and went back.
- 29:36 **Was this your first operation? So what were you instructed to do?**
- 29:51 Well I hadn't had any instructions about what to do. So I kept on going but she was losing power all the time and
- 30:00 we dive bombed and that and when, after they bomb, they come up around seven or eight thousand feet, rendezvous they call over a certain spot, fall up and go home. I didn't have enough power, I couldn't get up there. I came along, two or three thousand feet, couldn't get up to them and went on my own bat getting lower and lower and lower and in the end I just got in over the, over the trees at the edge of the runway
- 30:30 just over, I was right down low. They wanted to know what happened, and I told them and they said, "What you do is you just drop your wheels and then turn around and come back, just drop your wheels and that lets them know that you're going back." The next day, I got offered a job and I got the same plane. They probably put a new set of plugs in, but the same thing happened we got half way up and
- 31:00 it started this missing and I didn't hesitate then and just put the wheels down and went back. I don't know what they did with the plane then, but I never had it anymore thank goodness. We were there, we were in Mussolini's son, Bruno Mussolini, his son was a pilot and he had a house on this drome and that was our
- 31:30 mess, had this plaque outside, 'Bruno Mussolini'. When I got there my flight commander was, I knew him in Geelong when I learnt wool classing he came from up New South Wales, Riverina, proper sheep station, and he was at Geelong College and he used to come down, all five of them
- 32:00 half a day a week to do a bit of wool classing so they could do it when they got back home. He was a bonzer [good] chap and a good athlete and he was in the head of the river crew rowing and went for his race and stepped in and put his foot right through the bottom. I'll always remember him, I've got his photo in there. He put his foot through the bottom of the boat,
- 32:30 you can imagine how popular he was. But he was a good fellow. Next thing we went up to place called Foggia, cold freezing cold, and all we had, we had a little stove a heater for our mess.

- 33:00 All the Americans, every camp every tent had a chimney coming out of it smoke pouring out of it. We had hardly enough wood for this little thing. I remember we pulled up a train and got a bag of coal of it once, then the fellows went off, in Italy you can imagine the population,
- 33:30 there was very little firewood about. You'd see the women, they might have a little bundle of twigs and take them home. Our fellows set off and they got stuck in to an olive grove, now these olives take a long time to mature to pick and they got in and were cutting this down, greed, and I suppose it burnt. You can imagine the Italian,
- 34:00 he was going mad. Anyway he came up to the mess later on and gave us a colossal bill for these trees. They were probably valuable. He had this bill, I don't know if he ever got paid or not. We moved, although the heavy bombers came in and took over Foggia and we moved on to another place, Milani
- 34:30 we had just a metal strip. They started off, the Kittyhawks with 250 pound bombs and then 500 pounds and then they were a 1000 pounds, 500 on each wing. Well then they finished up 2000 pound bomb and you really knew you had that she just waffled along.
- 35:00 The group captain he was going to try and get off with three 1000 pound bombs and the first time he tried he never, he went along the runway and probably never got his speed up quick enough. I believe later on, I don't know, I believe he did take off with 3000 pounds.
- 35:30 Now 3000 pounds is as much as a flying fortress used to carry. We were 2000 pounds with one engine, they've got four engines. Then, this is the bad part. We used to go around the farms getting pigs and turkeys and things if we could
- 36:00 to make the rations a bit better. When we went in, the Germans never had any inflation at all, lire, they were the same
- 36:30 80 to the pound. When we went in there straight away they printed them 400 to the pound. As we went up Italy there's no inflation, we'd come in and 400 pound notes all over the place and they still reckoned it was like 80 to the pound. We were buying it cheap. But they had 400 note about that size
- 37:00 and 100, 50, 20 and even 1 lire. We used to go around farms. This is why. Over in the desert days, you remember like the Italians they surrendered a lot, any way this day so many of them surrendered and they had their hands up
- 37:30 and all of a sudden they all dropped down and had a machine-gun set up behind and they just wiped out all the Australians and one of them was my mate from over at Drysdale. I was a bit niggly with them, so I didn't mind what I did when we got to Italy. After doing that I've got no sympathy for you. We used to go out and get these pigs. What we used to do we'd perhaps have the 10 shilling note on the top and a wad of one lira notes on
- 38:00 the bottom. As we were haggling over what we were going to pay I'd be waving this wad of notes around and we'd get it up in the truck and there'd be a fellow there sitting up with the engine just ticking over. Soon as we got up in to the truck I'd hand him this wad of notes and before he could look at it we'd be into the truck and off. So one day, just getting on to Christmas we got to get some
- 38:30 turkeys. Across from where we were there was a hill with a track going up, up to town and we drove up to there and coming back we could see this farm and we could see all these turkeys and there was a whole crowd of Italians, I think there must have been about 20 altogether, kids and women and men and we pulled in and said, "Will you sell the turkeys?" "Yeah." "How much?"
- 39:00 "So much a kilo," he said. "Oh no we'll buy the lot," 26 there were 26 turkeys. "No, no, no by the kilo." They had to weigh every one, tie their legs and put in a heap on the ground. We wanted them up on the truck not on the ground. There were a lot of kids around and we had these V cigarettes, we used to get a ration of them they were, those that smoked,
- 39:30 reckoned they were terrible. So we used to take them and barter them. To every kid, one cigarette one turkey out on the top, a cigarette for every, so we had them up there in no time. I had this wad of notes and I handed them to the boss and said, "Right oh Sandy," Sandy was the driver, and flew for the thing and he went like that and he spotted all these one lira notes, he yelled to all the others and they
- 40:00 swarmed around the truck and they grabbing the turkeys they were trying to and we had these packets of V cigarettes so we started throwing the around everywhere, and they thought bugger the turkeys, jeez they left them there going around to these cigarettes, it finished up it was only the boss he had his hands over the tailgate trying to hold us up. Of course he had no hope.
- 40:30 we said, "Goodbye." We were always, we used to always come from the American camp over there, we let them know that we were Americans. We had, we never had anything on our uniforms and we put our caps away and on the trucks a bit of mud over the RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] and we were always, you could always tell the American camps because they always had these chimneys with smoke coming out.
- 41:00 There were two or three Kiwis [New Zealanders], they had a racket going. The Germans they took all the all the livestock and stuff and they had these bullocks for ploughing and couple, these Kiwis they

got hold of a couple of bullocks and as they went up, they'd go to the farm and sell them, they never had any so it was no trouble

41:30 at all to see their bullocks. Half an hour or so later, they also had MPs uniforms, Red Caps, well they'd come up two of them done up in Red Caps, "Where did you get these?" "Well they were stolen, we've got to confiscate them." They'd move up and sell them again.

Tape 5

01:08 **Are you able to describe the training on the Kittyhawk's for us? What they involved and how you became accustomed to the Kittyhawks?**

01:21 Not really much to say,

01:30 like going from one to the other, Tiger Moth to the Harvard you still doing the same thing. Kittyhawk were more powerful and climb quicker and fly faster, practically the same only they were a bit more stronger.

02:00 The Kittyhawk, I don't know if you noticed that book up there I saw you look at it, a friend of mine he's got it and brought it over for me to have a look at, he's got Spitfires, Mustangs and Kittyhawks. Like everything's got its job, you got a car, you got a truck and you got a little racing car everything

02:30 is made for the job. Spitfires and Mustangs are sort of, they were fighters. The Kittyhawk was originally designed as a fighter, but when we got to Italy we had complete air superiority and I say, all the time, I never saw a German

03:00 plane, I might have seen two once way in the distance just specs, I thought they could have possibly been Germans, but I don't know. We had, originally the Kittyhawk was to be a fighter, but when we got to Italy and there was nothing to fight we were dive-bombing and that Kittyhawk was ideal for dive-bombing. They were faster going down than any of the other

03:30 planes and that's what we wanted to get in, we never had any air opposition but we had a lot of ack-ack [anti-aircraft gunfire]. Going down doing our job and out quick. We were hard to hit. We never had, might have got the odd hole, but there wasn't too many shot down in the actual operations. There were probably more lost through

04:00 accidents than actual enemy action.

04:06 **You talked about the payload of the Kittyhawk, ultimately you said you were carrying 2000 pound bombs. What else did you have?**

04:17 Yeah we had six machine-guns, three each side, point fives they called them, and they were devastating.

04:30 **What did the training involve when it came to Kittyhawk and firing the machine-guns, dropping bombs, you're not just piloting?**

04:35 You'd be taken up in a Harvard and they'd, I say I did the same myself, I was an instructor at times and I'd taken them up and do a dive and just tell to go down and your target is

05:00 there we used to pull up through and we used to pull up through and you never went straight at it you had to pull your nose up because you're, well you could have been going vertically, but nearly every time if you're on a slight slope you got your, we used to put the bead of the gun site on the target and then just before you let your bombs you used to pull your nose up a little

05:30 so that the bombs would come like that on to the target, well that was just a matter of experience and time. Sometimes you've started and your bombs don't get too close and then you get more experience, used to get pretty close to it and direct hits sometimes.

05:53 **Just to clarify, where did you do most of your training on the Kittyhawks?**

06:00 We'd start off at the OUT, we'd be doing a bit there.

06:10 **That was in Egypt?**

06:11 Back in Egypt, Abousir. Then when we went along in to training flight we'd have more practice we took time and we got there, pretty experienced at it.

06:25 **Abousir was the OTU, do you have any other memories of the middle east and of Egypt and of the Egyptian people for example? How did the Aussies get along with the locals there?**

06:46 You had to have your wits about you. When we first arrived there we had landed at Suez and we went by

train up to

- 07:00 Alexandria. We were the bunnies. They took you down every chance they got. They'd come in reckoning they were selling you whisky, it'd be cold tea, managed to get the bottle open somehow and looked all right, it didn't worry me because I never drank it, a lot of them did. The money, we didn't know the money too well
- 07:30 and found we paid them too much. We were there four or five weeks we smartened up a bit. On the train trip back we thought it's going to be our turn. So we got to, on to the station and Egyptian's would have their baskets of oranges and chocolates and things and someone would come
- 08:00 along and push to the back of the basket spin it around, stuff all over the place, and everyone would pounce on it and pick it up for him and going in to their pockets. On the stalls, book stalls, swarm around and someone would hold a book up in front of them, "How much is this one?" And while they're doing that they're stuffing the books down.
- 08:30 In Cairo you come down from Alexandria there's a station there and then you move across about a hundred yards away and there's another station and that went down to Suez. So we moved across there and I was sitting down on the steps and we were right alongside on the outside line waiting and it was all barred, no one could get in or out, only through the main door.
- 09:00 Gypo [Egyptian] came along with his baskets and he said, "Buy anything Aussie?" I said, "Yes, yes." He said, "What do you want?" And I said, "I'll have chocolates and bananas and oranges," or something and he'd pass them through and said that will be so much, I said, "Thanks very much." And I started to eat it in front of him and he's going mad, bouncing up and down, and
- 09:30 then he could see that he wasn't going to get paid, they can take a joke, you know they give them and they can take them. He went made and anyway he started chuckling and a couple of our fellows came up and said, "Where did you get all that from George?" They were all George you see, "George over there." He sang out, "George come back," and
- 10:00 he said, "We'll have so and so and so and so," he said, "All right that'll be so much." And they passed it through the bar and then he winked at me and he laughed and off he went. Our fellows are going mad and they said, "What are you laughing about?" Well I felt a bit of a traitor but it was funny as I ate the last bit of chocolate I had I told them what
- 10:30 I'd done. They wanted me to pay them. I said, "If you're not smart enough to do that well you suffer it." That was funny. Another time a friend of mine, we went in to Cairo on leave and we were walking along looking at the shops and an Egyptian
- 11:00 came up and he said, "Do you want to buy a diamond Aussie?" It was as big as my fingernail. I said, "It's not a diamond." He said, "Yes it is." "Where did you get it from?" "I found it in a taxi." I said, "It couldn't be a diamond." A diamond like that you can imagine what that would be worth. He said, "It is a diamond, look." He was standing out the front of a shop and he drew a figure eight about that size on
- 11:30 the plate glass, cut clean as a whistle. I could see the Jew boy inside the shop, his eyes just went like that, you can imagine, and he came out and he's after him and that was the last we saw of the heading down the street flat out. I never knew anymore of the, whether I was a donkey and didn't get the diamond off him or not, but it'd have to be a diamond to cut like that?
- 11:57 Maybe he had a really small one tucked in there.
- 12:00 Maybe, I just don't know. They were smart enough to do something like that. I'll never forget the look on this fellow's face when this figure eight appeared on his plate glass window. We were coming home in Cairo again and at the same time there was a boat load arrived from England and
- 12:30 they came out and I said, I got friendly with them, and I said, "You want to smarten yourself up a bit, they'll put things over you." Well the first thing one shoe boy said, "Clean your shoes Aussie?" "No, I've just done them." He said, "All dirty." And he looked down and there was a great streak of mud, they get someone had put mud
- 13:00 all over the shoes. And another fellow he bought a paper to read, it turned out to be a French paper, but the worst one was one of them said, "I've always wanted a Longine watch and I've never had the money for it." He said "I'm going to get one." This day we went in to town and we were out at Heliopolis, it's the longest non-stop tram run in
- 13:30 the world, from Heliopolis to Cairo, the brown tram they call it, so we got in and he bought this watch and he's looking at it all the time and thrilled to bits with it. Got in the tram and sitting there waiting for it to go, and got it up there on the window sill like this, and he had it there for a minute, and it was getting dark then. All of a sudden from outside a hand came and grabbed his watch, snapped the wrist. He
- 14:00 had it about two hours and it was gone. I told you to watch yourselves. They learnt. I always say, experience is the greatest teacher, sometimes it comes fairly dear, that's what happened to them.

14:30 **Apparently after Abousir you went to Tripoli, would that be correct?**

14:36 Yes, after we'd done the OTU we went to the Heliopolis transit camp and then we flew right along to, stopped at Benghazi stopped at a few places along the way, 130 degrees it was, oh hot.

15:00 Stopped at the Marble Arch, saw that, and then on to just past Tripoli to a place called Zuwarah. Beautiful spot, right on the beach and the water was as clear as crystal. We did a lot of swimming of course. I was swimming with this fellow I tell you about the Victorian champion diver, and I could swim faster than

15:30 him. Anyway there was ship had been sunk there and it beached, it must have been torpedoed and blown a hole in the side and you could swim in to there and it was sort of dark and you could swim in the hole and swim around in there and there were steps up out. I got up, I was looking watching him on the far side, I was laughing and talking and

16:00 all of a sudden, I wiped it off my face, I said, "Look out a groper!" Well you've seen a duck running? He was like that across the water. He nearly killed me. Another time there was a heap of seaweed had come up, it as about that high, and we used to get up on it and dive in and

16:30 come up. I got up first and he's coming up and I've got my foot on his shoulder and I pushed him back in and as he came up I hit him in the face with a handful of seaweed and he, I told you he's a wild Irishman, and he was getting wild, he'd come up again and I'd push him back, then hit him again with the seaweed. About three times. He said, "I'll kill you, I'll kill you." I knew I could swim faster than him so the last time he came up I dived over and we had

17:00 to swim about a quarter of a mile and by the time, he'd cooled down by then, but he'd have killed me if he got me in the first place. It was hot there. We went, after a while, we went, that was in Libya, we went along to Tunisia that was another place oh it was different all together. They only had hessian tents, it was 130 degrees and the only

17:30 water we had was just enough to have a drink and just wash your face, nothing no showers or anything. There was an inlet, something like Lakes Entrance, I don't know if you know it? It's only a very narrow entrance and opens up to a pretty big area and it wasn't very deep. In that heat and the evaporation

18:00 it was like a salt pan. We used to go in, and you had to walk out nearly a quarter of a mile to get the water up to here, it was like a hot bath, but out there you could dive down and a foot at the bottom was a bit cooler and you'd come back and by the time you'd come back through this hot water you were sweating.

18:30 You never had a shower, you just wiped yourself a bit to get all the salt water off you. It was terrible. It was that hot. I remember I was getting a towel and this bucket of water, and wrapped it around my hand and about 50 yards to go to the mess and by the time we got there it was bone dry. Hot. We used to just fly early in the morning and it was too hot

19:00 to get in to the plane, it was like an oven. One day I was flying along, had done what I had to do and was coming back along the beach and I could see half a dozen Arabs on their camels coming down. I got within about half a mile and they all jumped off and got in to the water. This must have happened before, someone must have shot them up. The camel was there and I came, I flew

19:30 over them as close as I could go, I thought they'd fly off everywhere, you know they never took the slightest bit of notice. Just plodded along, never frightened at all. I know if a plane came over us like that, just without any shooting, it would frighten the life out of you. They never turned a hair. Those Arabs, they were off.

20:09 **Why were you being sent out to Libya and Tunisia?**

20:23 Then the squadrons had been along there and they moved across to

20:30 Malta for a little while and then to Sicily. We were, training flight it was called, a pool of pilots waiting to go. Same as we were down in Rhodesia. We were at Bulawayo doing a bit of theory waiting to get, until there was room on the

21:00 next course. As they wanted pilots they'd send back whatever they wanted.

21:08 **When were you assigned to 450 Squadron.**

21:13 It was that day we were, I forget exactly, whether we were exactly going to the squadron to join it or we were the whole flight moved across,

21:30 we were still there at the flight and then called up. But when we got to Sicily most of the fellows they were coming in the DC-3, most of the flight, and these six we got out of the plane at Sicily and they said that there are six to go to the squadron and we flew them. We went there, we just on to the squadron then. Whether we would have gone straight on or we would have been back in

22:00 the squadron would have been back in Sicily and we were there, whether we would have gone straight to it then I don't know. Whether it was just because we flew the Kittyhawk there that we went on.

22:12 **Where were you first based, whereabouts in Sicily were you based?**

22:16 We were only there about an hour. When we came over and landed there. We'd practically got out of one lot of planes and went in to the others. Within an hour we were off on our way across to Taranto.

22:30 Grottaglie was the aerodrome.

22:41 **What was to be the main objective of those squadrons?**

22:48 Dive-bombers. There were no opposition in the air. We were after, well the first, a lot of the work was

23:00 stopping their transport, stopping their movement. So we bombed railway lines, freight trains, transports and anything any trucks or anything we could see. I remember the first, I think it was my second trip and we had to bomb

23:30 a railway line. The idea was they had the bombs with different fuses some were instantaneous others were half an hour time, two hour even up to 24 hours so that they couldn't get to, every now and again one would go off, so they'd keep it off for 24 hours so they wouldn't have to go there. Anyway I

24:00 came back and they came up to me and said, "Congratulations." I said, "What for?" And they said, "Well you hit the train." Well it shows you what it must have been like, I didn't even know, I didn't see a train I was bombing the line I thought, and the bomb must have dropped on the train. It must have been,

24:30 **That was your second operation, the first one was where you had problems and had to turn around, can you describe the sensation of being out there and doing the job that you were trained for and you were hitting the target, were you able to see whether you'd hit a target?**

25:02 Yes. Late on you see we'd dive from 10,000, 12,000 feet and we'd come down about 1500 feet we'd let the bombs go and then if you were quick enough you could pull up and look over your shoulder and see your bomb burst. This is what happened, we'll come

25:30 to it the day I got shot down. Do you want to go on to that?

25:37 **I'm thinking between Taranto and, where were you based when you got shot down?**

25:50 We were up Cutella, we were half way up Italy.

25:57 **So that was a bit later. Maybe we should try to, if we can, work our way up? Do you remember when you were based in Taranto was there anything else that has stayed with you?**

26:07 We weren't there very long in Taranto. I don't remember a lot, I don't know exactly it may have only been a week or so and we moved on then to a place called Bari, it's up on the Adriatic side.

26:30 We were there only a little while too, I don't remember much happening there. We had, I told you we had Canadians, New Zealanders, South Africans and English. About all I remember of Bari

27:00 we were asleep one night and these Canadians, they'd been out and they got pretty drunk, and they came back they were saying, "shh shh," someone would trip over something and crash and they'd say, "shh shh," that was enough to wake everyone up this, "shh shh." It was really funny the way they went on they were that drunk, trying to do it quietly and making more noise, enough to sink a ship.

27:30 That's where we did our shopping we had the benefit of this inflation and we did a bit of swimming, but the beaches there were all stone. You know what our beaches are like, they were nothing like that.

28:00 Over on the other side there was sand, but the beaches on the Adriatic side were just all pebbles, hard to walk on. About the only thing I can remember there was an American Lightning came in one day with one of the, they've got two propellers, one was

28:30 feathered, something must have happened and he was coming in to land and he put on a real turn, turned up and swooped down then and he landed downwind and couldn't pull up in time and bashed in to a brick wall at the end, a stone wall. Did he get a hoy. Putting on this turn and forgot to land with the wind.

29:00 There was not much else at Bari.

29:07 **Your squadron was just Aussies?**

29:11 No that's what I said there were Kiwis, South Africans, Canadians and English, that's why we wanted to join it because we thought that would be better having the mix. Whereas three, three squadrons, three squadron they were all Australian. I think it was better

29:30 mixing up with all the other fellows.

29:34 **What did you learn from all these guys from different backgrounds and what did they learn from you?**

29:40 I don't know. We had one of the Canadians he had a

30:00 sister in the Canadian hospital and they, as we moved up they moved up too, we sort of mixed together a fair bit and that was good, especially when we got to Rome. We, my mate and I, went up and saw her and said, "Have you got another friend? We'll come

30:30 down and go and have a swim outside Rome." Anyhow they came and when we got there, there was like a dressing shed and there hundreds of soldiers swimming there and we said "we don't want to go amongst them. We looked down a little bit, half a mile, down the beach and there was no one there. We said, "We'll go down there." We went down there, there a barbed

31:00 wire fenced , got 'mines' had on it. 'Mines'? We said they'd have got it clear by now. I wasn't very keen about it and they decided to go and my mate he went first I put my feet in his footsteps, we went, I still shudder about it stupid, we could have got blown to bits.

31:30 We went in and had our swims and that and came out and got away with it. I still shudder about it. There was something I was going to tell you and I forgot. The first time we were going down we were stationed just outside of Rome and we came

32:00 through and said we've got to have a look at St Peter's Church, so we went in and went around, you know just to say when we got home that we'd been in and seen St Peter's. We said that's not good enough, so we had to be go back and have a real good look. It's incredible inside St Peter's.

32:30 **Sounds like there was occasionally a bit of female company as well?**

32:37 Not very often. That was all. I never had anything to do with the Italians. I neve had time to get to know them, just these because they were, we sort of moved to together, they used to come out to the camp occasionally, out to the squadron.

33:00 After I 'd finished the tour, I had to be back to Egypt to the OUT, I was instructing this time.

33:30 I somehow, I don't how it happened or why, there was a lot of the English WAAFs [Women's Auxiliary Air Force] they came out to the, we had a dance one night on the aerodrome and we met one of the girls, there was another person too. We used to have a swim

34:00 at the canal and swim across and back. I was just standing there and talking and a troop ship came along. I said to the girl, "Have you ever been a bit..." I don't know what they were, WAAFs, the English or something, "Do you want to have a bit of fun?" I told her

34:30 what I was going to do and when the troop ship came, it was only 50 yards away from her, and when they were level I put my arms around her and kissed her. Oh a real hoy from the ship. Everyone, I don't know how many troops were on it, and they heard all this hoy and they all came over to this side. So then, I got her skirt and lifted it up.

35:00 You can imagine the screams. Put a real list on the boat. I think that's in the book somewhere, a lot of people have read it and it was only one woman who ever said anything about that pulling her skirt up.

35:27 **So she was pretty sporting by the sound of it.**

35:30 She reckoned I had a good sense of humour. They were on their way out to Burma, they weren't going to see anybody for a while. We moved up.

35:51 **We moved up Taranto to Bari and you talked about Rome, what was after Bari?**

36:00 From Bari to Foggia and we were only there a little while and the heavy bombers came in. One day we were standing there and we heard this roar in the distance and we couldn't make it out what it was. It was the first time we heard it, there were five hundred bombers probably come and bombed somewhere in the North of Italy and they never had enough petrol to get back so they came down. I

36:30 often think what it would be like now if five hundred jets came over, bombers, it would be colossal the noise. I think we were in Milani and had the turkeys for Christmas and I'd had these two

37:00 the twizzle, hit the rocks and then the plane coming from Sicily to what's its name and if you have an accident you get a red in your log book and each time you put in a report about it and each time the log book came back and I never had a red. My mate was going crook, "You should have a red in your log book'.

37:30 Anyway when we moved up to Cutella, what happens some go and do a job bombing and they come and land at Cutella, and the rest of us come up in trucks. So he was flying this time and he came back, he

came in to land and they never had a wind sock up. He did this, what I told you, there was a crosswind and he

- 38:00 ran off the runway and the wheels folded up. He had to make a report about this and he came up to me, "Look you've had plenty of experience with this what do you say in these reports?" "Well they know exactly what happens so don't go trying to put anything over them, just tell the truth simply what happened, but don't go putting anything over them just tell the truth and emphasise that there was no wind sock. You should get
- 38:30 away with it." He put it in and came back a little later, nearly crying. He got a red in his log book. He said, "You've had three and you haven't got a red and I had my first little one like that, got an excuse no wind sock and I got a red." Still cries over it. The night we landed in Italy all our bed rolls were still back
- 39:00 in the DC-3 and never came until the next day. That night all we had, someone gave us a blanket and a parachute pack for a pillow and we still had all our clothes on. There'd been a lot of bombing there and all the drains were broken and there was water lying and the mosquitoes would eat you. So we just settled down and perhaps
- 39:30 had our hands out, mosquitoes on your hands, I got my gloves and put them on and then they got our ankles so I got my flying boots and put them on and then they flying around your head got my helmet and put that on and then on the face, I got a towel and wrapped that around all I had was my nose sticking out like that and I couldn't go to sleep. Three o'clock in the morning and I hadn't slept, they were just landing on my nose all the time. I just got up and walked around
- 40:00 he was the same. Four or five days later, he had malaria. See I already had it down in Rhodesia, so that's why I didn't get it. After the war was over he came home and he went blind, they reckon it came from that night with all these mosquito bites that he had. They sent him in England and he did a physiotherapists course
- 40:30 even though he's blind he had a practice up here in Melbourne and he did really well. He's still up in Melbourne there and he's only a couple of yards away from the Waverley football ground. Still there, he did real well. His wife cam from Toowoomba and we had a trip around Australia in the caravan, on the way we called in and saw him.
- 41:00 He was incredible. He went out, we were sitting around his wife, my wife different chairs around, and he went out and got the drinks and came straight to each one with the drinks that they wanted and we got talking and I used to grow a few vegies and he said, "I've got a veggie garden out here," he said, "Come out and we'll have a look at
- 41:30 it." Pitch black and here I was hanging on to him and he's walking, he's taking me out in the dark. Terrific job, he had it all like planks stripped garden, how he picked the difference between plants and weeds I don't know but he had a terrific garden, better than I had. That was terrible to go blind like that was terrible.

Tape 6

- 00:32 Not a lot to say because we were stuck there and half them would be away on a job the others well I don't remember we didn't play much like any sport, we had an odd game of rugby, my one and only game of
- 01:00 rugby that the pilots, aircrew played the ground staff. My one and only game of rugby and I forget who won that. We used to play a lot of card games for a little bit of a gamble, there was no heavy gambling, a lot of them drank a fair bit, I didn't drink at all.
- 01:30 I had a glass of wine, that's all they had mainly, or Marsala or something. I was saving my money. I never had a lot of money when we, practically none, when I got engaged before we left to come away, I was saving up. I wasn't miserable with it, but I didn't throw it away. A
- 02:00 lot of the fellows used to say, "Eat drink and be merry tomorrow we may be dead." I thought that all right if you're dead tomorrow it doesn't matter what you've done. If you live I'm going to have this money, and that's the way it turned out. I say we played a bit of cards, we had our own mates, our
- 02:30 tent mates. I told you we had just moved up to Cutella and that night, turned up a real gale and we right on the edge of the Adriatic and we were right on the beach and we were there late and just stuck our pegs in for the tent, just in to sand, and
- 03:00 during the night the wind came and you could hear the tent working like this and the next thing the pegs are gone and the whole end of that tent is flapping away. Well there were four to the tent, one fellow was really sick, I've forgotten now what was wrong with him, the other fellow was that drunk he didn't care, he'd finished his tour and that night he'd had a real party

- 03:30 and got up on the thing and demonstrated how to dive bomb, I've got a photo it somewhere, his eye all plastered up, crashing to the ground, he didn't care what happened, and my mate over there I thought he's awake too, I was the donkey I got up and put the pegs in and anyway you could hear it working away and the next thing it's away again. "Right oh," Gary Bloomer, we used to call him Knickers, I said,
- 04:00 "Go on Knickers out you go, you're awake." We finished up all night, they'd only go five or ten minutes and it'd go again. They were only short pegs and in to the sand they didn't hold properly. Then, back at, when we were at Foggia we had a lot of photos taken and were put in to the town to be developed, before we got them back
- 04:30 we'd moved on to the next place, Milani that's what it was called, and I'd flown in the morning and in the afternoon I was free. So the engineer had a motorbike, I said, "Lend us the motorbike, I'll got back and get those photos." He said, "All right, he gave it to me." It was the first time I'd ever ridden a motorbike and instead of going straight there down the road I went up there in to the hills looking for pigs and turkeys and
- 05:00 things. I got a flat tyre. I started to push it towards the main road and I got sick of that I started the engine up and walked alongside for a while. I got sick of that. In the end I just rode it flat. Got to the main road and there's a British army camp there. I went in and told them what happened, "Can you mend it for me?"
- 05:30 "Or can you put me up for the night?" By then it was too late, black outs and that, it was too late to go and get the photos and get back. "Can you put me up for the night?" They said, "Yes." I was thinking, what am I going to get, two of the main things on the squadron was letters from home and what you're going to eat that night. This night I knew we were going to have pork chops,
- 06:00 special, every know and again we got something like that and we were having pork chops and I thought oh blow, I'll probably be getting bully beef and miss out on these pork chops. I was sitting up there and in it came, a whole wild duck, and beautiful potatoes and cauliflower. Beautiful vegies and this whole wild duck.
- 06:30 Next day when I got back, first thing they said, not where were you, what happened or anything, they said, "What did you eat last night?" When I told them a wild duck they wouldn't believe me and reckoned I was just putting it over them. That was right. I couldn't believe it. There was a salt lake beside the camp, someone was shooting these ducks. We used to go mushrooming. Why the
- 07:00 Italians, they were short on food, but they never ate the mushrooms there were paddocks of them you'd go out and get cases of them, no trouble at all. They never ate them, don't know why? A lot of people don't like them, I'd say a third of the fellows, whenever we were doing a job we had an iron triangle and we'd rattled that and sing out 'gaggle' and the ones that were on they'd come running up,
- 07:30 to go, and when they'd get up there we'd say mushroom gaggle, going and pick some mushrooms. Some of them went screaming, "Oh not mushrooms again," the ones that didn't like it. Well the ones that liked it we got as many as we could. The look on the faces who didn't like it when you said mushroom gaggle.
- 08:00 **Earlier today you mentioned Bruno Mussolini's house. Can you tell us a bit more, describe that for us?**
- 08:08 It was a brick house and all the floor was tiled and was cold, it was hard, it wasn't cold because it was warm. Lying on the tiles, didn't help us get to sleep, and the mosquitoes
- 08:30 were the main things. It was a nice place there was nothing really special about it. Just had his name up on the front and it had been shot up too it had bullet marks all over it. I suppose when the aerodrome was built it'd been attacked.
- 09:00 Can't say much about it, that's about all.
- 09:06 **Was there a lot of rivalry amongst the pilots, in terms of your strike rate with your operations?**
- 09:20 No, no I don't remember anything like that. Nothing like that. The gaggle board was put up each day, there were two flights, A and B flight
- 09:30 A flight would do a job and then B flight would do the next one. No, I wouldn't say there was any rivalry. Nothing like that.
- 09:46 **That's a great detail for us when you talk about the gaggle board. Can you tell us about the nature of the day, of a typical day?**
- 09:57 I've got a photo of the gaggle board up there if you'd like to see it.
- 10:00 What was that you said?
- 10:25 **If you could tell us the nature of the job, the nitty gritty [detail].**

10:26 You can

10:30 imagine there were all sorts of different jobs. We'd have this board, the team would be there ready with all their instructions, it might be early morning call, 5 o'clock call, 6 o'clock breakfast, take off, well you had to wait for the call to come through before you could take off. You might be waiting half a day and you might only be a few minutes and off you go. Then

11:00 like there's your gaggle board, you've got all the, who's on the job, your position in the flight, two squadrons, well 12 was a full squadron, they'd have six down on the bottom, they were red and blue cover on the top, six up here. Then you'd get the

11:30 call time and you'd go over the ops [operations] trailer they'd call it and you'd get all your instructions, where you were going, what you were to do, and all that and then you'd get in the truck and they'd take you around to your plane and away you'd go.

11:56 **How were you navigating on those ops?**

12:00 The leader, he'd do all the navigating and like all the rest of us never had to worry until you were the leader. You just followed him. After a while I got promoted, flight commander, and I had to do

12:30 it. Well up til then you did a bit of map reading but not much, so I was a bit worried at first. At Cutella, and we were moving across pretty soon across to the other side to a place called San Angelo, so I got, one or the other flight commanders came with me

13:00 and I did a bit of map reading. I was fairly, I was probably fairly good at it, I hadn't done anything and I was a bit worried and thought I'll try myself out and actually never ever had any trouble with it. Only once when we were at Rome and, well I knew it,

13:30 I knew Italy better than I knew Victoria, and there was two lakes up ahead and had to bomb on the second one. All I did was take a map of that area, I knew the way up there almost like going to Melbourne, and it was cloud all the way and when I get up there, there was a gap in the cloud and I looked down and here's the lake

14:00 and the lake was there and I had to bomb the bottom end of it and there was a road, the road didn't seem right it seemed a little bit further away then it should have been, and then there was a bump in the lake like that and that was there, but it just didn't seem to be in the right spot and I thought no.

14:30 Coming around to spot where the target should have been and I sang out, "Arm your bombs, get ready!" Or, "Echelon right," or "Echelon left, there in six, three here and three there." Those three should come out on one side or the other side. You could only go down one at a time. I said, "Arm your bombs." And I'm looking around,

15:00 and suddenly it dawned on me I was at the wrong lake. One of my mates, came over the wireless, "Wet." Wet behind the ears. I think that was the only time I made a boo boo [mistake] with the navigation.

15:27 **Were the bombs released?**

15:29 No I woke up and couldn't find the target,

15:30 I was already to go but the target wasn't there. "Wet," he said. He, Archibald was his name, and he was on his second tour then and when he came home, I don't know if you remember they had a TV [television]

16:00 show that they made, I wonder what it was called? Anyway he had a job on it, before that he was in with Qantas [airline], he was a captain flying over to America and back. He left that, and he got this job as technical advisor for these TV people doing this show. They were up at Bacchus Marsh

16:30 and they had a glider and he went up with Australian women's champion glider pilot, they were up and I don't know what happened exactly but they both got killed. All through the war all this and tons of ack-ack and he flew to America and he gets killed in a glider. He was a bonzer chap.

17:00 **Do you remember the first time you came under fire?**

17:04 Yes. That'd be on the first trip we did, I don't think there was a trip we did, hardly, we weren't under fire. We were luck I often think, you see we could move around a bit. Especially, it was a bit tougher down

17:30 low with the light stuff, it was pretty hard to dodge that, you've heard of the [JU: Junkers] 88s, you know the shell 88 they'd fire up 10,000 15,000 feet. They were incredible they could get your height right to the inch. You'd be flying along and a bomb would burst over there somewhere and they'd be dead level with you.

18:00 It'd be over there and naturally you'd turn over here and the next thing you'd see the bomb burst here again. Say 'ha ha' laugh to yourself. Also, they got cunning too with the bomb burst there, they'd expect

you to go over there and move over and put the bomb there and you'd be looking over there for it, but he'd be right up near you. It was a battle of wits all the time.

- 18:30 Where we were lucky, we could, if we got anywhere we could ack-ack we would alter our height, we'd spiral and that made it pretty hard to hit then. We were only once, I was flying along one day and a shell
- 19:00 burst, I reckon I don't know what it was, I just saw it and went through it, never got touched. Another split second on and I would have been right in to it. That was the only one, from the shells, that was really close. It frightened the life out of me.
- 19:30 **How far would you be flying from base?**
- 19:36 Mostly two hours, say an hour on one and an hour back. That would be often, we'd do the whole lot in three quarters of an hour or half an hour, sometimes we'd be a couple of hours. I don't know if we ever got up to three hours. A bit over two.
- 20:00 We used to go across over to Yugoslavia, I think it was bit over two hours, one hour over and one hour back. The day I got shot down over there, we were after two Seibel ferries, I don't know if you know what a Seibel ferry is. It's like two barges, two big barges, with a platform across the top and
- 20:30 it used as a transport to transport guns trucks anything and we'd heard that there was two along this island, Hvar, we all used to call it, we used to go over there a fair bit, we used to call it Haa-Vaa. After I got back I was to tell them it's not Haa-vaa its 'Hwaa'.
- 21:00 They'd say, "Haa-vaa." I'd say, "No, it's Hwaa." Anyway, there was 12 of us and they found one and they bombed that, this is when I got shot down, so we went up along the coast and couldn't find it and there was a harbour there and in the harbour there
- 21:30 was a schooner in the harbour, and the CO he went down to strafe it and then there was two of us were told to go and bomb it and it hadn't had a shot fired at it so I, I was the number two that day, the leader he went down and I got a shot and I came down and nothing fired and, like I told you before, you bomb and
- 22:00 then you turn as quick as you can and you turn your shoulder until you see your bomb burst. Well right in mine, I'm there, there's the ship we bombed and on the shore over here I spotted this Seibel ferry and it was looking straight in to the, you can imagine two big barges, the big well in between. Well they had pine trees all over it and in the water,
- 22:30 alongside, and from up top it just looked like a bit of coastline, because the trees were right down to the edge of the water only that I was down low and looked and saw this big well. I called up and told them that here was the other Seibel ferry and I turned and I kept on going and strafe it. I just came to it and was just pulling up over the top and they had guns on the side
- 23:00 and look there was a wall of tracer and I went in to it. Now I'd be doing over 200 miles an hour and straight in to the wall of tracer and the engine's gone dead, go from here to the fridge in front of me, 200 mile in to it and the engine got hit and I never got touched. You've got to be lucky sometimes haven't you? I can't get over it to
- 23:30 this day. If it was a little bit further back, we used to be there, we used to get right over it or underneath it, dodge it, but there was no time for that. I just saw it and never got touched. Anyway, after a little while there was smoke come up through, through the cockpit and I knew that I wasn't
- 24:00 going to get far and we had an island 15 miles away, I thought, it was only a fairly narrow one, I'll get across and ditch in the water, I knew I wouldn't get right across, but I'll ditch in the water and dinghy and swim and paddle the dinghy and hope I get across. I hadn't gone far, perhaps a mile and from the smoke it could
- 24:30 turn to flame. Then I knew then I had to bail out. Well, I thought 'ooh what do I do?' A bit of panic I suppose and most of the fellows when they got down they used to go through a drill they knew what to do exactly and I ran the hood back and we got wireless and oxygen tube
- 25:00 undid those, then I called up then and said, "I'm hit and I'm bailing out." And when I got back and they said, "Why didn't you call up?" And I said, "Well I did, it must have been hitting the wireless too." About three months later I woke up, I'd already unhooked the wireless lead.
- 25:30 The next thing I decided to turn over and just drop out the bottom. I got over and still had my safety strap done up. I came back and undid them, by then I think I got about half way over and it was getting too hot and dropped everything and went to get out and
- 26:00 you're like that, and I went to push myself out about that far and I couldn't, no matter how hard had terrific leverage, and I couldn't move an inch. It was an awful feeling, I never had a lot of height, and I though I couldn't get out and for one second when I couldn't budge an inch
- 26:30 the next thing I was out and I never remembered going out. I think someone was looking after me somehow. I was out. The next thing I went for the rip chord and it wasn't there and pulled a few times

and went to look to see where it was and went like that and had my goggles up here and when I went like that

- 27:00 they came down right across my eyes and couldn't see a thing. I thought, I never had much height, I'm for it and this is it. I thought of the parachute packer, he was more or less a mate, and each time I came back he'd have a cup of coffee waiting for me. This day as we went past his trailer he sang out, "I'll have a cuppa ready for you when you get back." I'll have to get it open, they'll see me get out and this is all
- 27:30 in a few seconds and I'll go back and say the parachute never opened. I remember them saying put your hand on your mouth, find your mouth slide around, so slid around and pulled, I opened it up just in time.
- 28:00 I landed at a range almost sheer and I went like that and the plane went over the top and I came and by the time I got it open I was well down here. Now if I'd been in that plane, remember I was pushing and I couldn't get out and I couldn't remember going out and next thing there I was out, if I'd been in the plane that much longer
- 28:30 I'd have been over and I would have landed on top of the mountain, before I got away. I was down here. I was still going a fair bit and anyway the parachute hooked up in the pine tree. I was up about there, undid the box and there were four straps, two there two there,
- 29:00 and I went to drop down and this one never came up. Next thing I'm hanging upside down like that. I suppose I was a bit dazed too after it all, I had a job of it. I'd just about get up and release the box, I'd just about get up and I'd be done and drop back, I reckon I was nearly five minutes there before eventually I did get up and drop down. There was scrub
- 29:30 seven or eight feet, there was trees and, in there and next thing I was only about half a mile out side of a little village, and I could hear someone coming and I didn't know if they were Germans or Yugoslavs or what, and so I didn't sing out and I sort of hid for a while and then I heard some girls amongst them. I sang out, you wouldn't believe it one of
- 30:00 the fellows ran out, rushed out and hugged me and gave me a kiss. Not the girls, just shows how unlucky I am. Anyway come on quick the Germans are coming. So we went through a gap in the mountains and we climbed up the mountains and they got up there and they stopped for a while and we could hear cowbells down below, "C'mon, we've got to move." Germans, the cowbells are a signal. Wherever the Germans were at they'd ring these cowbells.
- 30:30 We went along down in to another village there. They took me up into a bedroom, all I had was a little bit of a burn there nothing much, but anyway they put a bit of oil on that. I think everyone in the village came in to see me and they all brought a scone or a cake or something and they were that pleased to bring and I
- 31:00 had to try and eat it. See I'd only had a big breakfast about an hour before and didn't want anything, but to please them I had to. After a while they went I curled up and had a sleep. One of the fellows came back in afterwards and he said, "C'mon," and he pointed to my boots, my flying boots,
- 31:30 he said, "Domani." 'Domani' is 'tomorrow' in Italian, I was starting to learn a bit by then, I thought 'what the heck's tomorrow all about?' So we went down the street walking along and we were just about to turn around the corner and he tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Germani." Germans. Looked back I nearly died. There was 25 of them within a hundred yards. I don't know why they never stopped us?
- 32:00 We just walked down there and around the corner. I take my hat off to that fellow just like it was Sunday afternoon. If they'd have caught him with me, they probably would have shot him straight away. We went around the house and there was a stone fence and we got down behind that and we were watching them and they went in to every house and searched every house and one of them
- 32:30 went in where I'd been and when he went in I looked, we used to have a belt we carried a belt and we had all our stuff on it and we had a revolver, a medical kit, escape kits, maps, money everything was strapped to it. Whenever we did a job we just put, hook that up and away we went. Oh heavens, he saw me do it, and he said, "Pistoli, pistoli."
- 33:00 And I had to stay back on the bed. I nearly died. Anyway we watched after a while he came back out the fellow that had gone in went next door and they went on and searched every house. Then they formed up and went away. We went back and climbed up and you've got to be lucky sometimes. You see when he called me,
- 33:30 when I'd had a sleep and just threw the belt off on the bed, and when he called me I had this eiderdown and I threw it down and it covered it up. You've got to be lucky sometimes haven't you? Anyway that night one of the fellows came with and we went up the hills again, down the valley up another lot and down to the beach and walked
- 34:00 right along, we started off, about 7 or 8 o'clock at night and we walked until about, I had a look up on the map and I worked it out that I reckon it was 15 miles in these flying boots. I learnt that flying boots were meant for flying not walking. I was a cripple by the time we finished. We got there and there was a

little fishing boat that used to come in every

- 34:30 two or three days from Vis, this other island, that one island that we had. This night it was coming there. They were taking me back to get this boat. When eventually we got there it had gone, we had missed it by about half an hour. I'm glad we didn't because I had about another three days. We got there and we started to climb the
- 35:00 hill again and we'd only gone a little way and I'd absolutely had it and I'm not going anymore. I just curled up and sleep right there. He said, "No c'mon, c'mon." And he picked up a stone and threw it, only another stones throw to go. So we went another, we climbed up another couple of hundred yards and no sign of anything. That was it I got down beside a log and he said, "No, c'mon there." I said, "Here."
- 35:30 This is what you read about in the Westerns about how there's a bush there and behind the bush there was a cave's mouth and we went in there an there was a cave bigger than this house. It was 40 partisans in there had a fire going in there. They gave me a cup of tea, it was the best cup of tea I've ever had in my life.
- 36:00 There was half a dozen of them, they were all getting ready for a ride they were going right back to where this harbour and German barracks and they were going to make a raid on it. Away they went and I had this cup of tea and I just curled up and had this cup of tea. They'd walked 30 miles, had their raid and came back before I woke up.
- 36:30 As I say, I just missed the boat trip, I'm glad I didn't because I had two or three days with them, although I didn't know the language, one in particular talked with our hands, he was a bonzer fellow. I wanted a little souvenir, and I said, all they had in the way of
- 37:00 a uniform was a little red star on their caps, "Would you give me that red star?" And I gave him my revolver, he'll do more good with that than I would. I've still got my little red star in there. I was there for about three days and the boat came in and I went back, of course to Vis.
- 37:30 When we got over there, there was a commando squad or company or whatever you call them, it turned out, we used to do the cab rank, I suppose you've heard of cab rank? Well for a start, this would be our aerodrome, we'd be here and the bomb-line's up there and if something happened we'd been held up with a gun or a tank or something
- 38:00 they'd have to send back here and we'd have to get back in to our planes and fly up there. After a while when we there was plenty of fighting going on we'd have a cab rank, we'd have about four planes go up there and just patrol for about half an hour and if there was anything, hold up you were on to it straight away. Then if there wasn't we'd have an alternate target and
- 38:30 we'd do that and come home. Another lot would come and take our place. Well they were there the green berets the were called, they were there and when I got to this island Vis they were there. So we had a bit to talk about. Well they had motor torpedo boats stationed there and they were going across to
- 39:00 Italy that night and I was going to go with them, and I've kicked myself ever since that I didn't. That afternoon a seaplane came in from Taranto, an Italian seaplane landed there it had a message or something and turned around and went back straight away, I went back with them. I kicked myself that I never went back in the, just for a different experience. We went down to, right back to Taranto
- 39:30 to Grottaglie, and then I hitched right up to Bari and the New Zealanders had a, they'd taken over a hotel there and used it as a rest to have a spell. We were allowed to go and stay there. I went in and there was three or four of our chaps there. I had oil all
- 40:00 over my uniform and had my gear, "What the heck? What have you been doing?" They didn't know anything about it and I was telling them all about it and while I was telling them the door opened and two fellows had come down from the squadron, they knew I was prisoner over in Yugoslavia. When they saw me there they nearly dropped. One fellow put his case down there and opened it up and
- 40:30 he's handing out shirts, shorts and hats and things, he said, "I'm pleased to hand these back to you." That's what they had to do if someone got shot down, all the personal stuff went home and the rest of the stuff was just put in to the store. So in stead of doing that they, some people do it others wouldn't help themselves. Well he'd helped himself. "Pleased to give these back."
- 41:00 I think that's where we first met that night they had a dance the kiwis and the Canadian nurses, the sister of the pilot was there, that was the first time I met her, and then we got friendly and. Went back to the squadron
- 41:30 it wasn't long and another fellow, a New Zealander, and I were sent on leave, back to Bari. We used to get our, all the grog for the squadron from the place there. We had the three ton truck, took it down and every morning we'd go in and we knew we were going to get a truckload...

Tape 7

00:32 **Just finish the wine story.**

About the strafing? Well some fella in New Zealand and I we were on leave and the job was, we had three tonne truck and a driver and

01:00 we drove down to Bari, we stayed at the New Zealand's hotel there, and every morning we used to go back to this cellar where we were going and ordered the load of grog for about a week's time, we had and every day we'd get the little sample of glass and we'd go down to the big barrels, we'd go round the whole lot of them and

01:30 testing, you know, and nearly driving the fella mad, nearly drunk by the time we finished and we finished up buying a bottle. He knew he was going to sell a truckload at the end, but he used to put on an act you know, about drinking all his wine and then we used to go down to the harbour, and there were some Australians there in a motor torpedo boats, stationed in this harbour. We'd go down to

02:00 see them and they had been up to the squadrons, they were on leave, see, they came and saw our side of the business, so we went down to see them. We'd go along the wharf and we'd have this bottle of wine, vino or something and then we'd go along and there'd be someone on the decks of these boats and we'd sing out, "Hey, tell your skipper to come up and have a drink with us." Out of this bottle. And the idea was that he'd say,

02:30 "No, you come and have a drink with me." That's what we were after and that's what we used to get. We'd get down and have a drink with them and then we got to these Australian boats and they had already been up there, we knew them. We got down in the boat and while we were there he got the message, to shift his boat out of the harbour, along the coast a half a mile or so to another little harbour and pull up alongside an

03:00 American liberty boat. Liberty boat, I think they called it. So anyway, we were - we were - I think we were all pretty happy at the time. And I think I was steering and we went down, all of a sudden we're scraping over a torpedo net, luckily we came into the low part and as it scraped along and then you can see the skipper, he was dead scared, frightened that the

03:30 propeller would get caught in it. But anyway it slid over the top of it and he said, he'd forgotten all about it. He was fairly happy too, you see, he'd forgotten all about the net and we went around, pulled up along beside the liberty ship and there was a Negro came and hanging over the side and we said, "Hey, rasters, tell the skipper to come down and have a drink with us." And away he went.

04:00 He said, "No." He said, "You come up and have a drink with him." Which we were after and oh, it was different altogether. We got into the cabin and everything's beautiful and all in white uniforms and the waiters are in white uniforms and put on a real spread. Yeah, the little idea of calling in for a drink had worked. Forget what happened after that. Must have had a pretty good afternoon.

04:30 **Will we pick up on Cutella? When you were in Cutella?**

We had to you know get, take the stuff back. Anyway we were staying at the hotel where the New Zealanders were

05:00 and they were having a dance there. So this other fella, he knew some of the New Zealand lasses and he had the truck. We told the driver you know, he's supposed to stay and not to leave it. But we said, "We'll look after the truck." And we went and brought these couple of nurses back into this dance and about one o'clock we came across, had the truck parked across the road and we were walking across to it and it's not there.

05:30 Oh, you're in trouble. Because the driver should have been there, you see. We'd told him to clear off. He was in real trouble and we were too. Anyway, I don't know how we got the nurses home, that night, but anyway, the next day we went round and we got the MPs in searching for it, no sign of it. Eventually we had another ambulance, Australian ambulance squadron there,

06:00 and they leant us a truck to get our truckload of wine and beer and that back. And we were going back about ten miles out of Bari and there's our truck on the side of the road. And what had happened, or what we reckon happened, some of the New Zealanders, grabbed the truck, driven up to the front and then another crowd came back you see. Until they - and we had cans

06:30 of petrols and cans of water in the back and they had tipped a can of water into the petrol. And there she was. Oh dear, we were relieved, we were in real trouble, you know. Anyway, we got the petrol cleaned out and away we went. Got back. Thank goodness. Now, what was the other - Cutella?

07:00 **There was a few things at Cutella. You were strafed by the Americans at one point in their thunderbolts, cos they'd crossed the bomb-line, do you remember that?**

Oh yes, my word. This is winter time when we were there and it's wet and our mess got real boggy, you know so

- 07:30 a few of us said, "Look we'll go and get a truck and go up the road." And on the side of the road there was sand dunes see. We get a truckload of sand and put it in the mess. So we were doing that, digging away and all of a sudden there were these machine-guns. We look up and well we saw the Focke-Wulfs, Focke-Wulfs had the big radial engine like the thunderbolts. Anyway, there was two Thunderbolts, they come in and they're strafing us.
- 08:00 As I said, there were two or three Kittyhawks and they killed the pilot of the Walrus had picked up their American mates the day before. Killed him and the tales of what everybody did, I dived down behind the wheel of the truck that we were filling with - putting the sand and there
- 08:30 was the road and we were on the side there and they were strafing a - there was a motor repair unit on this side and they were strafing the motors, the trucks and things on this side. You know, just, from here to the road away. And I was down behind this wheel and I thought, well this is stupid because this is what we were doing everyday, any trucks you know, strafing them. So I jumped over the side and there
- 09:00 was a little depression in the sand about six inches. I got down into that and then you know, afterwards it was all over we went back and heard the tales of what the different fellas did. One fella got under the table in the mess, which was a lot of help. You know. Another fella dived into a blackberry bush. Another fella put his head in, there was a big pothole in the road, full of water, muddy water, he dived - put his head
- 09:30 in that. And all these sort of things that happened, oh it was funny. But then, the - I don't know, I just read about it a little while ago. It said that like, the American came up and apologised for what had happened and it said that the pilot that had done the strafing, he committed suicide, dived
- 10:00 the plane into the - you know - killed himself. But that was - I just read that somewhere. It might have been in that - was up the - up top there.

The thing was that they'd crossed the bomb-line.

Yeah, well, down Italy, all the way down, the coast goes like that. See, everywhere,

- 10:30 except at the big heel, you know at the heel, there and just above where we were. See, came down and there, that was the only place apart from the big one down there, that the - now they shouldn't have been flying if they couldn't recognise - and the bomb-line was just down below that. See. The bomb-line, you know what that is? Like we were one side and the Germans were the other. And just a few miles down from
- 11:00 this curve and see if they couldn't tell where they were, they were terrible map readers, the Americans. They shouldn't have been flying, if they couldn't tell that. And another thing was, that we never had any camouflage, our planes were there, no attempt at covering them up or anything. 'Cause, they never had any German planes. On their
- 11:30 side, you wouldn't see a thing. You'd think it was just, everything was camouflaged and you couldn't see anything. Unless it was moving. And they had come from that where you could see nothing on this side of the bomb-line the roads'd be chockablock with trucks and there's our planes, you know, right out in the open. It was terrible, that they didn't know. And we used to watch them
- 12:00 I had a mate of mine, he was in a Spitfire, he got shot down by an American. If you couldn't tell a Spitfire, he shouldn't be flying. And then there was another squadron, an American squadron they were going up and supposed to bomb just across the bomb-line, when they got there there's these planes were going down and diving down and I think they were Negroes, a Negro squadron, "I guess that's our target." And they just tacked on behind, and bombed our own fellas.
- 12:30 And the Germans tacked on behind them. Shot a few of them down. We used to watch them like a hawk. Happened to see an American plane, you watched it, till it was out of sight, you know, always frightened. They used to swing around, have a shot at you.

Did you have much to do with the Americans?

No.

No.

Nothing really.

- 13:00 **Is there anything else about Cutella that you could talk about? What about the operations over Yugoslavia and the harbours at Crete and...?**

Well, we used to go across every now and again, we bombed quite a few ship in there. The one I remember mainly

- 13:30 is - I don't - I think it might be Sibenik, where you come in, there's a very narrow passage in and it opens up into quite a big harbour and we got - when we got there, here's this boat, just comes inside, you know, and just coasting along and we got quite a few ships there. She was only there a few minutes,
- 14:00 to our bombing, didn't take long and we were off.

How big would the bomb need to be to sink a ship?

Well, in those days we were carrying 2000 pounds of bombs, sometimes we'd just have one 2000 pound bomb. Or two 1000 pounders and perhaps 1500. Three 500s, it varied a lot

- 14:30 you know, what we had. Had a terrible time, one time it was after I'd left and I was back in Egypt where you used to hear from the fellas and they'd be in their dive and going down and, "Bang!" The whole lot'd go up. And they didn't know what it was, they thought, they got some new ack-ack, you know, deadly. And it was about
- 15:00 eight of them blowing up like that. I was back in Fayed, instructing and one of the fellas in our group, he was mad keen to get back. You know he wanted to get back and he got back and he's hardly back a few days when we heard that he was one of these that went down and got blown up on his way down. And it turned out it had the wrong fuse in the bombs. And as they came down and built up this speed,
- 15:30 built the pressure up enough to blow the bombs up and about eight and you can imagine you know, every trip, someone's getting blown up and how keen they were to - you can imagine what it'd be like to have to go out and the chance of getting blown up like that. Well we were there from winter it was fairly cold, there was a lot of flying - we never
- 16:00 did when it was sort of wet and cloudy and that. Anyway, we were - had the runway and our mess was right at the end of it. And about a hundred yards or so away from it. The runway and our CO, he was always worried that if they came and did a strafing, or anything or someone overran the runway, they'd come straight into our tent. So he said,
- 16:30 "Well, we'll shift out to the side." And there was a hilled slope there and plenty of room. We shifted up there, a big job, you know, shifting the whole squadron up. We got up there, two days later, we shifted across to the other side of Italy. But just before that I got promotion, I got flight commander. And then when we got over there to (UNCLEAR Zolobai) San Angelo, I was a
- 17:00 flight commander and we got a new CO after a little while. And I never really got on real well with him. I don't think he should have been a CO. One of the things he did, straight away I noticed. When we had to do a job, we're here
- 17:30 and we had to do bombing over there, he'd draw a line on the map from there to there, which the last thing you did, because what happened, if you got shot down and they found his map and there's the line going right down to where the aerodrome was and it never happened of course but it could have. And I remember once we'd flown up
- 18:00 from this San Angelo across to the Adriatic and I was in the top section, he was leading, in the bottom section, I was in the top section, and I wasn't taking any notice of where we were going, he was doing the map reading and that. And we hit the coast and he said to me, he called up to me and he said, "Where are we? Are we north or south of the target?" Well I was on the spot for a while because I hadn't taken any notice, I thought he'd
- 18:30 lead us there. Anyway, I made a rough guess that turned out to be alright. Anyway we went to Rome, moved up to Rome after that. And there was a photo, I don't know if you noticed it, there was an Italian seaplane there, on the aerodrome that had been out here with two or three, other I think, flew out here
- 19:00 and they were at Point Cook for a while. And got the Australian RAAF insignia on it. That was in the fellas were having a look at it. When they got to this drome, all of a sudden a couple of mines went up, they hadn't been properly cleared of the mines had us all a bit scared, went and had a look at - we were going down for a swim off the coast
- 19:30 and on the way we pulled into St Peters and we were just going to have a look, in and out and down to the beach and I said, "Well we've got to come back." Because it's absolutely magnificent inside. It doesn't look such a lot from outside, but inside, it's incredible. And I said, "It's no good, we've got to come back and spend quite a bit of time having a look at it." Then just after that we
- 20:00 moved up El Faiyoum I think it was called, to a drome and I think I was only up there a week or so and I was finished. I went back to Fayed. And we got back to - this is where things all went bad. We had a movement order back to Naples.
- 20:30 And we had to go from there -

You went back to Taranto on leave at one point to visit the 451 Squadron, your mates at that squadron and they were all a bit shell shocked. Can you tell me about that?

Yes, when I had leave. One of the fellas

- 21:00 had a little Italian car, forgot what the make of it was, and there was about five of us I think, going on leave and all our luggage and this little car was absolutely full right up. Anyway we were down on the beach and it - had to climb up, like a cliff and then go onto the and, oh it boiled

- 21:30 so we had to go back and one of the fellas was a flight commander and he had a truck, 1500 weight, all the flight commanders had a 1500 weight and one of the other fellas they were going to get in. I said, "Look, leave it. Let them go." I said, "I reckon it was just because there was too much on the car." I said, "We'll go in that and let it cool down
- 22:00 and put some more water in it and away it went, they had the old 1500 weight down there and we had this little car. So anyway, one day, we knew this 451 Squadron was down there, at Taranto, so we thought, we'd go down and see them. And we went down there and when we got there, they were in - I don't know whether they were in hurricanes,
- 22:30 and they'd gone across and had rockets and they were having a bad time. See you can't imagine. With our dive-bombing coming that fast and in and away, but with these hurricanes are not terribly fast and you've got to come in straight and level, you know, to line up and they were just getting knocked down like flies. And they were scared stiff. And this day when we went there, they'd been over in Yugoslavia and they were waiting for them to come back
- 23:00 to see how many came back. I've forgotten now, exactly how many. I know like some were shot down, but they didn't all come back, but they were frightened and I said, well thank goodness we were all Kittyhawks dive bombing, not doing rockets like they were.
- 23:30 **Do you remember being in El Faiyoum?**
El Faiyoum that was the last place.
With Lou Sayer and the American camp.
That was the last place where I finished me tour there. It's about 50 miles north of Rome. And we came - another fella, a South African, we'd finished our tour and we were coming down together and we got into
- 24:00 a transit camp for the night and the fella that was in charge of it, he said, "Look, I've got plenty of whisky, if you'd like some." He said, "You'd get to Rome." And he said, "You get an American and you get a Jeep for a bottle of whisky." Oh, that sounds alright. We went down and we got into this transit camp, this camp and there
- 24:30 was hundreds of jeeps, thought we'll go and try it out, like donkeys, we went in and said, "Want to see the boss." CO. "Yeah?" I said, "We heard we can get a jeep for a bottle of whisky." Oh, did he go mad! Nearly threw us into the clink. Anyway we got to Rome and we hunted up and found a couple of Americans. Said, "Any chance
- 25:00 of getting a jeep for a bottle of whisky?" "Yeah, yeah. Meet you tomorrow morning, eight o'clock." And I shouldn't be telling you all this, where it goes. Anyway, we had a house that our squadron had taken over, used for leave. So we went there and when we got there, there was a New Zealander there, and he'd deserted from
- 25:30 the New Zealand division. He said he was on tanks, this was his tale, whether it was right or not I don't know - and he said he'd been in tanks and he'd been shot off a couple of times on flames and he said his nerves had gone to pieces and he asked then to you know, he relieved from it. He said, they wouldn't. So he said, he'd deserted. And he took a jeep with him when he deserted. And he said, now he said, he wanted to get across to North
- 26:00 Africa and get a ship there and become a merchant navy, in the merchant navy. And he said, "You can get me a flight across there," he said, "You can have the jeep." "Oh," we said, "that'll do, we could do that." 'Cause I knew over at Bari, of course the other side, there were an Australian transport squadron and the fellas flying it were
- 26:30 our instructors way back down in Rhodesia, knew them fairly well. And so off we set, we set off at night and about midnight, about halfway across Italy, we're coming up and here's a road block and fella pulled us up. He had the thing down, the bar. And he said, "Can I see your movement order?" Never had any. Then I thought, well we had a movement order from El Faiyoum,
- 27:00 from up there, down to Naples. So I pulled that out of me pocket and gave it to him. He just opens it up and probably saw the air force stamp and that, never read it, folded it up, said, "Righto." Lifted up - oh, here we were with a stolen jeep and a deserter and no movement order, we'd be in real trouble. Anyway we arrived over there in the morning and I went up to this fella that I knew, said he'd gone to the
- 27:30 flip across to North Africa, forget the town and he said, "Yes, yes, gentlemen, hop on, we'll be going in a few minutes." Anyway he went off and they landed at Malta and he got out, he had a - someone - one of the fellas had given him one of our bush hats, see and he was wearing that. And this - that same public relations officer that wrote, you know, that
- 28:00 did the big thing up top, he was coming from Cairo and the other way and got out and saw him with the bush hat and thought he was Australian see, went up and talking to him and he was asking him all about the fellas, you know, on the squadrons, of course he didn't know any, couldn't answer them anyway, he finished up, he told him, you know, he deserted. "Oh," he said, "You don't want to do that." And talked him into going back. And he went

28:30 back and I got a message later on, back in Egypt he must have been court martialled, see. And it came out that we had a stolen jeep and went across Italy this night. They sent up to our squadron 450, "What was known about this trip?" By me and this other - this fella across Italy on a certain night? Luckily

29:00 our CO was away or something and one of the other flight commanders, he was in charge and he just wrote back and said, "Nothing known about it." Well there wasn't anyway, they didn't know anything about it on the squadron and never heard any more about it. They could have chased it up you know, and I could have been in real trouble, but luckily never heard any more of it. And he - I say, he came back and got - they court martialled him.

29:30 That was the end of it as far as we were concerned.

You had a near death experience at Fayed in the Kittyhawk, is that right? There was a bit of competition between the pilots..?

Oh yeah. Yes that's - see back there, there was the

30:00 three types of planes: Spitfires, thunderbolts and Kittyhawks. Of course there was a bit of rivalry we all reckoned we had our best, because going down in the dive you wouldn't want another plane. The Kittyhawks were faster than all the others going down, had the speed where you wanted it. And anyway, I told someone about this just a few days ago. There was 2000

30:30 New Zealand troops, reinforcements. And they were stationed not far from where we were. And they wanted us to give them a demonstration of strafing and that. You know to give them an idea of what would be coming up for them. So they had them all lined up out in the desert and had trucks, old trucks about 200 yards away and we were to come in and strafe those trucks, fly over the top of them.

31:00 Of course what happened, we flew down as low as we could over them, if you see a plane coming straight at you, like that, it doesn't have to be firing or anything, it can frighten the life out of you. So we came at them and just before we got to them opened up these 6.5 firing over the top of them. And I can see them now, 2000 troops they all went like that and they - ready to fight. What I never thought about was

31:30 the shell cases coming out. See? Could have come and we went 200 miles an hour anyway. Those shell cases coming at 200 miles an hour and hitting them. But I think, luckily we were going that fast that they must have gone, I thought we'll hear all about this, you know, get a message from them, but I never heard anything more. I think that the shell cases carried on in the - with the 200 miles an hour and cleared them

32:00 but I was worried because I - what was going to happen. Anyway a few days later, we got a - put on an exhibition of dive bombing and strafing for them. Now the chief flying instructor and another fella they were flying thunderbolts, and there was two of us on Kittyhawks. They were to do the strafing and we were to do dive bombing. And so before we started

32:30 we did a bit of formation flying. We had the Thunderbolts in front and we were formatting on them flying around. We had a - went up and had a couple of practise goes before the day arrived. Anyway, this day the chief instructor, he said, "You can beat the place up if you like." Which is something you never get. You're not supposed to come down below 500 feet. So I said, "Alright, I'll get up and show them what a

33:00 Kittyhawk can do." And I went up to about 14 or 15000 feet, peeled over, full bore. Got it going as fast as I could, I reached 500 miles an hour. Now, I was dead scared. I was trying to get to 500, I got to about 480 or 90 had a job to get it to go that last 10 miles an hour, but I was dead scared the wings were going to drop off, see, she was only old Kittyhawks they had there, not good new ones. And anyway

33:30 she pulled out. I came down and I levelled out over the drome and then over the flying control, over the mess and our huts. Oh, what happened, when you're diving, and you increase your speed, that the pressure's on the plane alters, you get more pressure in some places than others. And if you don't do anything you go along sort of sideways, so you got

34:00 trim, you do that as your speed increases, you alter the trim, it keeps you nice and straight. Well, I did that. Well then, I levelled out and went over an all of a sudden I decided I'd do a roll. Now this is where you get into trouble. You do roll without thinking what you're going to do. Now I don't know, you probably didn't know, Gold McCain, he was a

34:30 New Zealander, in the early days when they went over and France hadn't capitulated, he was over there and he was going back to England on leave and he said, he'll have a last quick trip in the Spitfire, and he came in and he did a roll and he did things I suppose without thinking properly and he spun in, he hit the deck and got killed. Now Bluey Truscott, he

35:00 did well. I don't know if you read his tale. But anyway he was over in England in the Battle of Britain and then made a name for himself, came out to Australia and New Guinea, did well there. And came to Darwin, and he was doing something that he shouldn't have, and killed himself. Something - probably did something like that - a roll near the deck and

- 35:30 without thinking properly and this very nearly killed meself too. Because going down I altered the trim and came out over the thing just starting to pull up and as soon as you pull up your speed drops off quickly and I should have been reversing that trim. 'Course I never thought about it. I just did the roll. Now you do a roll, you just keep in that line and roll, see. But when things go wrong,
- 36:00 you do like, a barrel roll and when you're pulling up, your nose is up above the horizon. Well I - things went wrong, me nose was down the - I wasn't very high, me nose was under the horizon, I'm going down and things have gone wrong, I would have - instead of being rolling nicely, I'd have gone out like that, and I'd have hit the deck. Sure as eggs.
- 36:30 Luckily I - when I got to there and I stopped. If I'd have gone any further I was gone. If I stopped and I pulled the nose up, it was this way actually, pulled the nose up and then I came around and landed. Just like that. Looked real good. And they didn't realise how close I was to killing myself. If I'd have just kept going down from there,
- 37:00 I'd have - you know, I only had - I don't know how long. Maybe 20 or 30 feet, see. I'd be gone. No, you've got to be lucky sometimes. So we showed them what the Kittyhawk could do or shouldn't do. Well then another fella one of me room mates
- 37:30 back there at Fayed, and did I tell you about the diamond on the window. I told you didn't I? Anyway, we both got posted home. Or we could go home if we wanted. And we were going to do that, we were all set to go home. And I thought, 'oh blow it.' I thought, 'we'll get home and be home for
- 38:00 a couple of weeks and you get sent up to the islands.' And I said, "You've got to say goodbye again, you know all that." Actually I was engaged and I was to be getting married as soon as I got home and I would have to get home and then straight off up to the islands, and got to say goodbye again." And the war looked as though it wasn't going to last long, they were there. So I thought, I'm going back to the squadron and then go home and stay home. So I
- 38:30 went back. I couldn't believe it, I was back there, two days and the war finished. So we were - lucky, that was terrific. I never did an op after that. And the rumour was then that we were going to go out to Burma we were sitting there for a while and we sat there and sat there and never went. I think the idea was that they were waiting to see the results of the atomic bomb, this is just my idea
- 39:00 We should have been there for five months. Up there in north of Italy, north of Venice, just below the alps, into Austria and around the place, five months holiday and we never moved like when the atomic bomb came over well the next thing it's over and we were coming home. But those days, you'd get
- 39:30 anything for tyres from the Italians. So this is where I went bad, I'd been collecting these tyres. One day I went up to the CO, I said, "Look," I've been bunged in as messing officer. And when I got back I thought it's a good omen, war's over and I haven't got any jobs. Usually you had something or other, barbs and messing officer or you had to look after all the accounts
- 40:00 and that. And I got nothing. And we were down about a week and next thing I was bunged into messing officer. I thought, oh gee. Actually it was the best thing that happened, because I got a truck, for meself, 1500 weight, and yeah more or less, do as I liked, we got out around the farms, buying vegetables and stuff. We used to get a ration of cigarettes, V cigarettes,
- 40:30 terrible cigarettes, I've never smoked, but those that smoked, they wouldn't smoke them. So I used to take them go around the Italians and swap, barter one cigarette, one egg, you know and like this. We get a map out and have a look and there'd be a lake up there, good for a swim and half a dozen of the fellas, we'd go up and all the way there or back we'd get in the middle of the town and blow the horn and toot and go on
- 41:00 and they'd come out and see what's going on. And then we'd start bartering the things. You know, had a real good time. Anyway so we were out trying to get tyres whenever we got a chance. One day the cooks came up to me and said, "We haven't got any wood for fire." I thought, oh what the heck - where am I going to get wood from? 'Cause wood, over there, you can imagine with the population that every bit of wood that gets left lying around is gone. You'd see women coming along with just a little handful of brush taking that home. I thought - we used to bomb a lot of bridges and railway bridges, and there'd be broken sleepers lying around. So two or three of us, got in this 1500 weight and down sure enough. We came to this bridge and sleepers lying around, we got them, took them away. They were starting to repair the bridge...

Tape 8

- 00:32 We went down and got this wood, you see, and they had this generator there with four nice wheels on it, tyres. Well that night I went back and my mate, he was a villain too, he'd do anything, and he was a truck, he was one of the transport drivers and I said, "Look, there's a generator down there with four
- 01:00 nice wheels on it. What say we go down tonight and have a look at it?" He says, "Righto." The bridge

was over a river, dry, and this generator's on this side and on this side there was a key British Army camp, so we went in very quietly with lights out and we jacked it up and we got three wheels off and we couldn't get the fourth one, it was stuck somehow or other and

- 01:30 we'd been very quiet up till then. Anyway we finished up with a sledge hammer, belting it to get it off. We had the car, the truck with the engine running, ready to dive into it in case someone came over. No one came over and we got these four wheels and went back and I said to him, I said, "I reckon it'd be fairly interesting down there this morning about nine o'clock." So I hopped in the Kittyhawk and flew
- 02:00 down and flew around over them and there the Italians, they were waving their fists, they had military police and an Italian carbonari there. I said, "I wonder what all the excitement's about down there?" Anyway, eventually we sold it and I heard that you could get tyres up in Austria, so I went up to the CO and I said,
- 02:30 "We're just about out of crockery, I hear you can get plenty of crockery up in Austria." And he gave me a look. He said, "Alright, off you go." He said, "Take half a dozen fellas with you." They were - we went up there and - I'll never forget the first night we drove through the - over the Alps and got into Austria and then we went into a - we had a hotel that
- 03:00 troops had taken over. And we went in there. We were hot and dirty and they had glasses, I'm not exaggerating, that high and beautiful beer and lovely froth in the top. And we tore up and had a shower and came down and poured us one of these and it was just like having a drink of cold water. There was no alcohol content in it. Practically nothing. And we finished up putting rum in it, to try and spark it up a bit.
- 03:30 Anyway, we had a week there. And we were getting some tyres, round up, filling the truck up and we drove along one day and there was a German truck, had run up on the side, and the wheels were still spinning and oil was running out of it, and there was no one there. So before you could say, "Jack Robinson," we had the three wheels from
- 04:00 the top and off. I'd like to have stayed, see what happened when they came back. Anyway, we got quite a few tyres and then we got to a place where they were taking the transport off the Germans, they had to hand them in. We went to the fella that was checking them in, said, "Any chance of a car?" You know, "Italian Lancia." "Yeah,
- 04:30 yeah, help yourself. You can have anything you like up there but you can't touch anything here." Where he checked them in. But until it came in, we could have whatever we wanted. And all of them, beautiful Mercedes Benz staff cars, you know, we thought, that wouldn't go to well driving that around. We came across - there was a Ford and I reckoned they must have captured it, the Germans must have captured it off the Russians, lease lend stuff see. So we got that. And we
- 05:00 painted around the bonnet and a number from one end of the bonnet to the other and over. So then we had to get it back into Italy. We'd gone along, we'd toured around Austria and spent about a week up there, it was terrific. And then we had to come over the border, well first of all, we were in the - the Poms were on the first side and I was in the car, I was driving the car.
- 05:30 And me mate, he was coming along behind. And we said, wait half an hour - oh before we left, I went and I got a movement order and as he wrote it out, he said, "What do you doing?" I said, "Oh look for graves, you know, crashed pilots." And I was - I wanted two, see, one for the car we got and one for the truck. And I went back and I said, "Look I don't like this
- 06:00 idea of looking for crashed pilots. Give me another order you know, of something else." So he said, "Righto." And he wrote out another one. So I got me two. So when I came up I was driving the car, that's right and I went over first and they came along half an hour later, and I had to pass the English alright but on this side was the Americans. And he gave me - had a look at my one and, "Okay." We got through.
- 06:30 Went down the road about half a mile and turned around the corner to a hill there. And we stopped, got over and watched. The others came along, after all they'd got past the English and they got over to the Americans and they were there for ages. And although they had trouble, this American, he looked at it and he said, "How many of these goddamn Flight Lieutenant Griggs are there?" He had the same name on both and he remembered,
- 07:00 but luckily, he had the truck with all the tyres on it, luckily he didn't look in the back. We got home and sold them. Had a trip every week, I organised a trip from where we were, Udine, across to Milan, 250 miles each way and we used to get part of a tin rigged up we got organised and we used to get fish over there, the whole thing was
- 07:30 to go and get a feed of fish, we travelled back all night and have fish for all of them for breakfast. But the other idea was to go over and sell the tyres at a market, over there. We'd just arrived up this Udine and the CO said to me,
- 08:00 "Look go back, there's a town, a hundred miles or so away, there's a brewery there, take a truck and get a truckload of beer." So I got this mate of mine again, and I said, "Now we won't go straight there, we'll go up into the Alps, you know drive around." We had two or three days there, we went up around

Cortina [Cortina d'Ampezzo] where they used to have the Olympic skiing, saw all that. And eventually we came down two or three days later, went

- 08:30 to the brewery and said, "I want a truckload of beer." He said, "Can't give you any." The Americans had taken it over the day before. We'd gone straight there, we would have been right. And they wouldn't even give us a bottle. I had to go back and tell the CO, I said, "The Americans have got it and they won't give us any." Didn't tell him about the three days up around the hills. We'd gone straight there we would have been right.
- 09:00 And it wasn't - it was five months we were up there, like that. Around and then we flew - went across to Milan, railway trip right down to Taranto and the boat across to Haifa. Funny thing happened, as we came out of the harbour Taranto, as we came into Suez, on the way, there was a
- 09:30 boat there, bombed, burnt out, just a burnt out hulk. The [SS] Georgic. When we left Taranto to come home, as we sailed out the harbour, the Georgic sailed in. You know, coincidence, it'd been taken home and repaired and done up and she was - there she was, good as gold again. Got to Haifa, blazing
- 10:00 hot day and we wanted to have a swim and they wouldn't - they had the gang plank going down, the captain going ashore but we weren't allowed to go down and have a swim. The only thing you could do was dive, 30 feet, I'd never dived 20 feet before, the last ever dive, 30 feet. I said, to
- 10:30 another fella, "You dived 30 feet?" And he said, "Yes, but a long time ago." I said, "You go first and break the water." It was like a mirror, the water, well he went in and sort of, you could see the surface a bit and I get him up onto the thing and in without even stopping or thinking, if I stopped and had a look at it, I wouldn't have gone. We dive in like that and they let us up the gang plank, but we couldn't go down it.
- 11:00 So then we moved to Egypt. I've forgotten the name of the town, up that end of the Suez Canal, we're unloading there, and they'd taken all our kits off, the trunks, and someone's trunk fell down and went, got lost. And we were all - didn't know whose it was, we were all hoping it wasn't ours.
- 11:30 Luckily mine was alright anyway. And then we were there two or three weeks, waiting for the boat, [HMS] Stratheden, and playing bridge, back in Italy one day, three fellas sing out, "Anyone play bridge?" I played a bit. So I said, "I'll have a go." No one else did. But
- 12:00 there's two games, contract and forget the other name but whatever it was, I'd played the opposite game to what they played. And - but anyway, I stuck at it and learnt and played all the way from - quite a while up there, on the train down, across, bought books in Cairo, played all the way home on the boat. And never had a game of
- 12:30 bridge since. Just got the hang of it and gone.

Can I ask you about your contact with your family while you were doing these tours. Especially when you were shot down over Yugoslavia. Did they know about that?

Well, it was only just the letters, like. And another - when I got home,

- 13:00 well my wife to be and her mother and father and mine and Michael's we had a dinner and I'd never had it before, but we had this meal, we had fruit salad with it. What's it, I said to me wife, girlfriend then, I said, "Mum's tipped a fruit salad into the meal." She said, "We do that now." Have the fruit
- 13:30 you know, with it. And anyway, after a while she said, "Did you notice your mother's hand?" Shaking, see. Parkinson's disease. And she said, like the shock of me getting shot down gave her this Parkinson's disease. And she handled it pretty well, for a few years. Hard to say now, I'd say five years
- 14:00 anyway and then she went into hospital in Geelong, they wanted to check up on her medication and that, get the tablets right and anyway, she got worse, she's in there about five or six weeks and she passed away then. But they said that it was the shock of me getting shot down, gave her this Parkinson's disease.

How did she find out about you being shot down?

- 14:30 Well the CO - I've got the message up there, like he wrote and said that I'd been shot down and said, that I'll most - that they'd seen me you know, in the parachute out and in trees and he said, "He'll be a prisoner of war, is all. I can tell you he's alive but he'll be a prisoner of war."
- 15:00 So it was about a week I suppose, I got back and of course straight away they wrote - sent a message you know to say that I was back and safe. And I remember my girlfriend, she was a WAAAF up in Melbourne, came home for a weekend and the bus stopped a little bit down from our house and her mother and father came walking down
- 15:30 telling her that I was alright. Little bit of a relief for her. And they got the messages, that's all, I don't know exactly how they took it all when they got the first message and when they got the one to say that I was alright.

What about the blacksmith who heard

16:00 **the radio broadcast, you speaking on the radio?**

Yes, well that's all that I know. Like I - after I came home I was talking to him and he was telling us how they'd been told that this was coming over the air, over 3AR [radio station] and he said they got all ready for it and he said, "Now anyone even breathes." Like he meant make any noise at all, he said,

16:30 "I'll knock his bloody head off."

Did your family hear that broadcast too?

I think everyone in Drysdale heard it, see. They sent down to say that it was going to be on and sort of well they just pass it from word to word. When I was missing, the postmaster, it's his job

17:00 to go you know and tell the people I'd given my girl's father's name as if anything happened, there's my people and him. And the postmaster was supposed to - anyway this night the postmaster came down and you know, they were just talking for a while and my father in law he was wondering why, you know, he sort of never, ever had to come down before,

17:30 and he was just talking and then eventually he broke the news that I was missing. And then it wasn't that long, about a week and they got word that, where I was safe. You've got to be lucky sometimes. Anyway, I was wondering, was a wool classer before the war and

18:00 I'd gotten married almost straight away after I got home and I didn't want to be travelling all over the place all the time when I was just married and I was looking around, wondering what else I could do. I loved the land, looking around with me father in law, he was an ex-orchardist and you know, what I could do and anyway the day we got discharged, we came down on the train and they

18:30 picked us up to take us out to Drysdale and they were walking around the street where we did some shopping and met a friend of his who was an estate agent and they were talking and he just as a matter of interest, he knew that my father in law was an old orchardist. He said, "There's an orchard coming up for sale at Wallington." That's all he said. On the way home, he told me this and he said, "Are you interested in an orchard?" I said, "I don't know the first thing about an orchard, I

19:00 hardly know an apple from a pear." I said, "No." And the next morning beautiful day, had breakfast, he said, "Righto, come on, we'll go over, have a look at this orchard." He went over and he called in at other orchardists over there that he knew and they knew him as an old orchardist and he asked them about the orchard and he said, "Nothing wrong with the orchards."

19:30 It was the second biggest orchard in Wallington and here's me, never knew a thing about it. I said, "Do you think I can manage it?" He - "Yes, you'll be right." Said, "I'll help you." And one of the first things we had to do was spray. Oh that's right, we went down and had a look at the orchard and I wasn't interested, he was walking along and the fella that owned it and was selling it

20:00 turned out to be a chap that we were at school together in the same form. At the high school. And he and my father in law, they were talking and he was asking all about it and I was just coming along behind with the wife, then we were married and I wasn't real interested. But then, I started to look around, and every tree was loaded

20:30 and it was a colossal crop that year. And I thought, "This is just what I'm looking for." And money coming straight away, everything was there, a house and all the implements and so money coming straight away. The next thing, I had an orchard. Just because that fella had said, "There's an orchard come up for sale at Wally." Now if he hadn't have said that, we wouldn't have been sitting here now.

21:00 Don't know where we'd be. Wouldn't be married to Cath and -

So tell me what it was like to run an orchard. Starting out with the orchard and you're married..

Well, I started off, in those days, you had to spray with arsenate of lead. And you had to spray every 14 days. Well the first time, we never

21:30 had water laid on, I had to bucket it out of the dam into the thing, 100 gallons a four gallon thing. I was pretty soft then, see hadn't done any work for ages. Nearly killed me. It took me three days to spray the orchard. I put it away and I hardly put it away and the chap next door I knew him. He said, "I'll let you know when you've got to spray." As I say, I hardly put it away, he said, "Righto, get the cart out." I said, "I just finished." He says,

22:00 "You've got to do it every 14 days." And I said, "Oh heaven, what have I let myself in for?" And anyway, that year, we finished it out when the next year, DDT had come out. And instead of every 14 days it had to be very thorough, it had to be - see if you missed you got the apple -now if you missed part of it, the codling moth got into it, see and ruined it. So

22:30 the next year was DDT. And instead of having to be thorough and go round every tree, up and down and do the lot, you just drove along with the horse and cart see, horse and had a tank and the motor up on

top of it and had hoses and spray and just walked along and just brushed every tree with DDT. Never stopped at all, we did it all in about

23:00 quarter of the time and no effort. So that made it a lot better. Then a year or two later, they - a spray plate - spray paint came out that fitted onto the back of the tractor on the hoist, we had Ferguson's in those days and it was concentrated ten times. Where we had 100 gallons, on that,

23:30 all we needed was ten times the - ten gallons and put in ten times the quantity of stuff. And as you just drove past and just gave a little squirt and things. It's different time altogether then.

Were you getting good crops?

Well they varied, a lot. Every year they varied. If we got a big heavy crop one year, it'd be a lighter crop next year. And what'd happen, when you had the big crop

24:00 you never got so much for it, the next year when it was lighter, you'd get a better price, see. So actually you were better off by getting a lighter crop and a better price, not so much work. But also, I always used to - see I started off my life digging potatoes and I liked potatoes. I like growing potatoes. So I grew some, I had nice patch

24:30 my father in law, he was a potato grower too, he said, "Look, you could grow all your potatoes there." So I grew, put them in early and I was one of the first digging them and there was a potato board at the time and they had a fixed price on it. 25 shillings a box. One of the carriers used to cart peas and asparagus

25:00 and Drysdale, that was the market. He told me that they were there, getting 75 shillings a box. We're getting 25. Well I said, "Well what's good enough for them, is good enough for me." So I loaded the truck up and I went up there, the Victoria market and I'd never been there before, didn't have a clue what went on. But then I knew that there was one fella who was from Drysdale, he had a stall there. And I went in the middle of the night and I

25:30 went and looked him up and found him, he happened to be there. And I told him, I said, "I've got this truckload of potatoes, I believe I get 75 shillings." He said, "That's right." And I said, "I've got no idea what to do, where to go or anything." I said, "You don't know anybody who'll buy the whole lot for three pounds?" "I think I do." Away he went and he came back, this fella he said, "I give you three pounds." So we went and put his truck alongside mine, took them over I was

26:00 walking about this high, three pounds after 25 shillings, you know. So I stayed there and went round the market and saw what went on they were open. You're not supposed to do it, but they had cabbages slung over the top of them a tarp, they just rolled it back, it was pretty open. So I saw what went on and then I went to the office and found out what I had to do. Come in and book up a stall and come in.

26:30 And so the next day I was there, in and the lights come on about four o'clock the buyers come around and book up what you want and now when - see it was early in the season and scarce, that's why they got the price. I had them all booked out, and when anything's scarce, the buyer, that's the first thing they'll go for. Make sure that they get it. So here's the trick, I don't

27:00 know if you know it, but they got alley way, where all the buyers come down and the trucks come in from each side, see. Well, I was in here and the whole alley way was booked with these fellas and five o'clock the lights go up and they're not allowed to take the stuff away until then. Everyone runs, they're holding up their money and reaching, you know, taking boxes off

27:30 and I didn't know whether they'd paid or who got it or not and anyway one fella he came round to me and he said, "Look," and some of them are up on the truck. You know, passing them down. And he said, "Look, make them get off and just handle them one at a time," He said, "They'll wait. And so I did that and years later you talk to that same fella about that day and I was right from then on, but I always

28:00 thought experience is the greatest teacher and sometimes it comes pretty dear. And I don't know how dear it was that time. How much I - whether I'd lost or not, but it was good experience. So I always liked growing potatoes and later on, we were just - we had a little plough, used to go along and prongs sticking out the back

28:30 and the potatoes used to come up they go over these prongs and come up the top and - 'cause a lot of it get covered up you had to scratch and look for it. And then there was - I got a potato digger. Pulled with the horses, or the tractor and driven off the wheels. We got one of those and I was pulling it behind the tractor and I was working on it one day and all I had to do was, when you got to the end of the row,

29:00 pull the lever and that lifted this shear out of the ground, you turned around and then drop it in, and back down the row. And I had plenty of time to think, I was thinking if you could only put that digger up onto the hoist like all the other implements on the Ferguson and I worked it out and I thought it could work and drive it off the tractor and

29:30 I went home that night and I sketched it out. And I decided to have a go and I made it out of scrap iron and red gum blocks for bearings and an old car diff for on the side. And anyway it was a rare looking thing, but it worked. And I dug my potatoes and the fella next door he was

- 30:00 having trouble, 'cause he'd tried. The Ferguson had a spinner. They spun all the row onto another spinner see. From that one onto another and that one spread them out fair wide, 'cause you could only do one row at a time. So you'd come round to the next row, cover that up. And he had that and did it no good. Got me to come and dig his and two or three others got me to dig.
- 30:30 And then the fellas that were picking up behind it, they liked it and when the season finished at Drysdale, I said, "What about going contractor those other places." And, "Alright." And I rang up a chap down Warrnambool way and I told him, Wilkinson, he was a chairman of the potato board. He was the only name I knew sort of thing and I
- 31:00 told him about this digger and I said, "Do you think it's any use coming down?" He said, "Well I've got 30 acres you can start on." And so down we went and we went down on Friday, I had my wife and we had a little baby then. And we were going to have the weekend, like a holiday and when we got there, the grubs were starting and that's a - those days they never had the DDT and -
- 31:30 see you used to spray them with DDT afterwards to keep the grubs away. You could see they'd get up in the tops and the tops go brown, where they'd been chewing away. And there was some in the potatoes, and I said, "Look these grubs are..." Warm weather they multiply. And I said, "I think, best thing." I turned around and went straight back home. And I said, "I get down, try and get down and start here on
- 32:00 Monday morning." Which we did. I could fit the - I had a Chev [Chevrolet] ute and I could fit the digger into that and we couldn't get the tractor down, trying all ways, you know, transports and that, and couldn't manage it. Anyway, there was one fella, one of the fellas, he said, "Look, we'll drive it down." Drive the tractor. And he came over on Sunday morning,
- 32:30 daybreak, soon as it was light enough to see, he's off. A bit after four o'clock. And I said, "I'll give you a couple of hours start. And when I - I'll come down then and catch you up and we'll swap over. Give you a break." Well he's down past Camperdown, between Camperdown and Warrnambool before I caught him. And got there and we started off the next day and the - some of the fellas had already started digging
- 33:00 with the fork. Came along and said, "No." They wouldn't stay, they went. I said, you know they needed the break the chain, instead of picking up all the time, bending the back, they wanted a break. They went, the others stayed and it was beautiful digging, it was peaty soil. Now you've got the - I don't suppose, do you know a potato digger at all? It's like an endless chain, there's a big shear goes down under the row and
- 33:30 the whole lot comes up onto an endless chain and it's vibrating, then all the dirt goes through and the potatoes drop over the back. Well this was beautiful peaty soil. And it'd come through and it'd almost go straight through and as the chains come up and vibrating, the potatoes, rolled back so you normally used to drive in low gear if it
- 34:00 didn't go through too well. But it was going through that quick I had to bump up and I was nearly going in third gear. The tractor was going, racing up and down the rows and the station where they used to take the potatoes, was just a couple of hundred yards away. And all the local fellas were there and watching me, racing up and down the row. Say, "What's the fool doing?" And course, got this - Mr Wilkinson he got worried about
- 34:30 what I was doing. And he came over to me and he said, "All the fellas want to know what the fool's doing?" Well I said, "You hop on. Hop on the tractor and I'll show you." And I put it into low gear and just crawled along and all the dirt went through and the potatoes are rolling back and I slipped it up a gear and dirt came up until the end, going on the third gear they got up to the
- 35:00 top just as the dirt - the last of the dirt dropped through, the potatoes came out and dropped over the back. You could see you know, what the reason. He was happy then, but I think he was a very worried boy for a while. But anyway, every day, these bloomin' grubs they got worse. Oh that's right, some of the fellas, a lot of the fellas they'd come over and have a look, see at the thing. And they said, "Would you make me one?" Or they
- 35:30 wanted to buy it. "No I'm not going to sell it." "Would you make me one." "No." A lot of them came in. The fella next door, he said, "Look I got ten acres, can you do that next?" Another fella had 45 acres, I was going to make a fortune because they - the picker-ups they were making good money and I was getting the same as the lot of them. Ten times what they were getting.
- 36:00 And I - with another ten acres, another 45, I was going to make a fortune. Well the jolly grubs, they came and by the time we finished that 30 acres, they'd cleaned the whole district, was finished. Went across the fella next door, with 30 acres and he said, "No." He said, "They're gone." But he got hold of the potato top, he just shook it like that and it came out of this peaty soil, and he held it up and
- 36:30 here, every potato was stuck on and every potato was just riddled with grubs. The whole district was just wiped out, because they never had DDT to spray. But it was tough on them, it was tough on me too. Say, I was going to make a fortune, that old digger that - then he stopped. That's right. There's a lot of people wanted one, see. So my father in law

- 37:00 had - he was an agent for a machinery crowd at Box Hill in Melbourne. And he went up to see them to see if they were interested in making it. Well, just after the war, see this was, the steel was scarce. They said they never had enough steel with our own lines, but they told him another crowd that might be interested.
- 37:30 So we went and saw them and they were. Well, they were making wool pressers. And they'd finished up, like they'd run out of orders and they were looking for something to make, and they took it on and I was doing alright. They gave me a little royalty, they sold for about 180 pounds in those days,
- 38:00 And they'd give me two pounds a machine for every one that was sold. Was only a little bit. As I said, the best thing you can do, if you can, if you've got all these orders, go round and sell them, getting 30 pounds a machine. I thought, oh good, you know. So I started off in the market gardens in Melbourne and went round there and I went round a few of them, they gave me a list of every potato grower in Victoria, I got. They gave me, I went round the market gardens and
- 38:30 arranged a demonstration and they were thrilled to bits, because they got their lands and they got taps in the way and to come along, with the horse drawn something, they had to take all these taps out first. Whereas with mine, they come along to it, lift the digger up over it, go over and drop it down and didn't have to worry about the taps. So I had
- 39:00 this demonstration and I got their names and they were straight away some fella said they wanted one. Anyway the first day I went around I sold ten. 300 pounds that first day. 300 pound in those days, and oh, everywhere I went, it sold so it was the first one on the hoist, see. And it sold itself and I had no trouble at all and
- 39:30 I think I sold 100 altogether. And that next year, I had a lot of orders, people wanted them, but they didn't want it till next year. And when I went around, they said, "Yes, we're going to get it." But this crowd that made them, they'd been around every town in Geelong, was John Cressy, they're the mean crowd
- 40:00 they'd been down, they'd got one and put it in the window and they had them. And they did this all over the place and everywhere I went, they said, "Yes, we're going to get one but we'll be getting it from so and so." You know, in town. And I said, well that's the finish then. And I gave it away and they told me afterwards, they said, it was the worse thing they did, that I sold a lot more than all these other people that - you know taking it around and showing it
- 40:30 to them and giving a demonstration. I went to one place up north of Hurstville, fella wanted one, I said, well, I took it up and when I got there, he said, "Oh I changed me mind, I don't want it." And I said, I'd been around and organised a demonstration and I said, "Well, can I have the demonstration there." And he said, "Yes, yes, you can do that." So I went along and there was quite a few there. I'd only gone about a chain or below and one fella came up and he knew that the digger - that the other fella didn't want it, he said, "Can I have that digger?" I said, "Yes." And went along a bit further, someone else came up, said, "Can I have that?" I said, "You're about ten yards too late." And eventually got round the end of the row and fella said, "Oh I think I'll have it." I said, "I'm sorry, it's gone." And you know, they just sold themselves. And but I was going to do alright, but they ruined it by going round and getting locals in. They said they never had the sales the same as I was getting by going round and giving the demonstration. And the poor old digger, it finished up underneath, I think it might be still up underneath the pine trees somewhere.

INTERVIEW ENDS